



SCS #1395

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1892

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1894

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SCS #1395

OUR LORD'S  
THREE RAISINGS FROM THE DEAD.

PUBLISHED BY  
JAMES MACLEHOSE, GLASGOW.

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.

*London, . . . Hamilton, Adams and Co.*  
*Cambridge, . . . Macmillan and Co.*  
*Edinburgh, . . . Edmonston and Douglas.*  
*Dublin, . . . W. H. Smith and Son.*

OUR LORD'S

*Three Raisings from the Dead.*

BY THE

REV. HUGH MACMILLAN,

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"THE GARDEN AND THE CITY," ETC., ETC.

"Shall the dead arise and praise thee?"—Ps. lxxviii. 10.

Glasgow:

JAMES MACLEHOSE,

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY.

LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO.

1876.

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## *P R E F A C E.*

THE substance of the following chapters, with some modifications of form, so as to make the narratives more continuous, was given in a series of Sunday afternoon lectures to my congregation last spring. Like all who publish what has been prepared for the pulpit, I feel tempted to make apologies for them. But I have only to state that they are plain, popular expositions of the three greatest miracles of our Lord, which are now for the first time—so far as I am aware—brought together and made into a separate book. I have not entered into the deeper exegetical or scientific questions which these miracles involve, and around which so much recent controversy has gathered; for my aim has been to bring out as simply

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and clearly as I could the important truths represented in them—viewing them in the interesting light of acted parables. I have made use of all the critical and expository helps bearing upon the miracles within my reach; but desire especially to acknowledge my obligations for some suggestions to the writings of Archbishop Trench, Davies, Woodward, Baldwin Brown, Dr. Westcott, and Mrs. Fry. In the hope that what I have written, upon a theme so old and well-worn, may nevertheless suggest some thoughts of comfort and instruction to those who are brought by sorrow and bereavement into circumstances to need them, I have ventured to give these lectures greater publicity than they have already enjoyed.

H. M.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THERE are two reasons why a refusal to believe in the miracles of the Bible is more general now than in former times. The first is, that physical science has placed in a clearer light the unvarying order of external nature, and invested the idea of law with a grandeur and power inconceivable to our ancestors. And the second is the greater prevalence in these days of the gift of historical imagination; the ability to realise the persons and events of the past as if they were actually living and present before us. As supposed violations of physical law, many trained in science reject the miracles as simply impossible, and would not believe them upon any evidence whatever; and, vivified by the realism of the present day, and

tested by its standards, the accounts that are given of them are said by certain critics to present difficulties altogether unnoticed in the dim religious light in which they were formerly regarded. The full discussion of such objections, which have been repeatedly and abundantly answered elsewhere, would occupy too much space, and is besides foreign to the object which I have in view. I would simply remark, in regard to the first objection, that the so-called laws of nature, with whose existence miracles are held to be utterly incompatible, are, after all, only relations of force as they appear to our own minds; and we have no warrant for assuming that the subjective boundaries of our thoughts are the objective boundaries of God's thoughts. May not the miracles which seem contrary to some few laws of nature, as known to us, be parts of some great fixed order of causes unknown to us? I believe, indeed, that they are all referrible to law when taken into the higher classification of God; that, like the natural exceptions to the ordinary working of the laws of nature, of which there are so many striking examples, they come under a law which comprises both

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themselves and the daily uniform phenomena around us. We cannot bring will and original thought into any such sequence of cause and effect as we see in the objects of nature around us; and this of itself indicates that there can be no conclusive antecedent objection of a metaphysical kind to the occurrence of miracles. Besides, scientific men themselves allow that there have been three breaks of continuity in the history of the universe—the creation of matter, the production of life, and the formation of man. No forces or operations such as we see before us can account for these phenomena. They are absolutely unexplainable upon any theory of evolution. They may therefore fairly be regarded as “avenues leading up into the unseen,” and as laying the foundation upon which all the acts of interference with the established order of things—all the breaks of continuity recorded in Scripture—may be based. In regard to the second objection, I have only to say that it supplies its own corrective. The modern habit of thought, which realises the difficulties more vividly, can realise also more vividly the favourable evidences.

If the stereoscope of historical imagination, applied to the miracles, and raising them from flat inanimate pictures, to which no sense of reality was attached, into clearly outlined, living, and moving incidents, shows to the higher criticism of the day small and imaginary defects—it reveals to devout and unbiassed minds surpassing beauties, which remove or harmonize these defects, and produce the irresistible conviction of truth.

Formerly miracles were isolated from their connection with doctrines in the Sacred Text, and were regarded as the master-proofs of the Divine origin and authority of Revelation. Separated in this way, and examined upon their own merits, many have looked upon them with suspicion and distrust. They have wished to precipitate them altogether to the bottom, as a sediment accidentally collected by the breeze of circumstance from the disintegration of older faiths and myths, and to draw off from them the pure simple element of spiritual truth. But such a process is now manifestly impossible, for miracles are no longer regarded as mere evidences, but as essential



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and integral parts of the truth itself. Their evidential value is only part of their significance. They are acted parables—truths dramatized or acted before the eye, instead of spoken to the ear. They are not chance flowers that have found their way into the crevices of the old crumbling wall of religion, but the living stones of the structure itself; and if they are removed, the whole fabric must tumble down at the first shock. By this method of regarding them, the miracles have gained immensely in their power of convincing us. The subtle harmonies which they disclose to him who studies them attentively; their profound consistency with themselves, with the sacred truth which they illustrate, with the primary needs, sympathies, and aspirations of human nature, and with the laws of providence which operate in the ordinary world; their extreme simplicity and comprehensive variety; their refusal to make the supernatural more Divine than the natural, and the absence in them of the peculiar elements which plainly distinguish all myths, legends, and apocryphal miracles; these internal evidences produce upon our minds an impression, which we

may not be able always to define, but which is so strong, so cumulative, so abiding, that no amount of verbal criticism of the Gospel narratives, or of abstract scientific argument founded upon the laws of nature, can do away with it. If, indeed, the miracles of the Gospel were never performed; then we have to deal, in the record of them as imaginary creations, with a literary miracle a great deal harder to understand and receive.

One of the most striking features of our Lord's miracles is, not only the wise economy pervading every part of them, but the sparingness of their performance. In this respect, they conformed to that law of stability and silence, which is as characteristic of God's government in the spiritual as in the natural world. He who was not prodigal of revelation, and opened His heavens but seldom in the history of mankind, was equally reserved, when He assumed our nature, in putting forth His bared right hand from behind the veil and beneath the covering of His ordinary providence. Instead of availing Himself of the Divine power which He possessed, at all times

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and on all occasions, in order to confer startling benefits—as we should have expected a professed miracle-worker to do—He only wrought a few representative miracles, on rare and adequate occasions. There is an utter absence of prodigality in all the groups into which His miracles may be arranged ; and very specially is this to be noted in that distinct class of wonders in which His power over the last enemy was displayed. Only three instances are given of His having raised the dead to life. And although St. John, at the close of his Gospel, remarks that the wonders recorded are only a few specimens out of many which have been allowed to pass into oblivion, still we have every reason to believe that we possess an account of all the instances of this particular kind of miracle that actually occurred. There is a manifest completeness about the series, as regards number, gradation, and significance, which forbids the speculation that our Lord had resuscitated any others save the daughter of Jairus, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus. We can detect in each of these cases a special fitness in the miracle. One was an only

child; the other the only son of a widow; and the third the only brother of two orphan sisters. The closest and most tender relationships of life were represented. And surely if the evidence of three witnesses is sufficient to establish any fact, the concurrent testimony of these three eminent examples is enough to prove conclusively the reality, and to show distinctly the nature, of our Lord's triumph over death and the grave.

Our Lord's three raisings from the dead are the greatest works which He performed on earth. He who increased in wisdom and in stature is represented in the Gospels as rising from lower to higher manifestations of His Divine power. He began with miracles of nature, and ended with miracles of restoration from the dead. He removed first the sicknesses and sufferings, the privations and limitations, with which we ourselves have to struggle every day, and frequently with success; and then conquered the greatest of all evils—that death which is the triumph of sin, its most bitter and poisonous fruit—which we find ourselves utterly powerless to

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prevent or remedy. The hope which He came to establish was not confined within the narrow limits of this world; it was to have a fuller and more perfect dominion in the eternal world. And, therefore, the impenetrable wall of death, which seemed to bar the way, was broken down, and made the passage into a grander life and a wider place—the door into that kingdom whose gates are never shut. Although the other miracles lead up step by step to them, the three raisings from the dead constitute a group by themselves. For the other miracles, as Trench has well pointed out, we are prepared by our own experience; but these miracles are contrary to all that we have ever seen or known in ordinary life. We recognise in the conversion of water into wine, in the multiplication of loaves and fishes, in the calming of the tempest, and in the healing of diseases, a Divine acceleration, so to speak, of common processes of nature. Water is changed into wine in the vineyard, and bread multiplied in the cornfield, by the ordinary operations of sun, shower, and vegetable life extending over months; storms naturally subside gradually; and

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diseases are cured after a time by treatment of the physician, or yield to the restorative powers of nature. Their analogies in the external world, or in the field of providence, render these miracles less astonishing and more comprehensible. But there is nothing in nature analogous to Christ's raisings from the dead. These are unique actions, transcending as well as superseding the ordinary laws by which nature works. "Between disease and health there is no distinct line of demarcation; the two conditions shade imperceptibly into each other, and the transition between them is made every day, and in the experience, some time or other, of almost every human being. But between life and death—between the continuance and cessation of existence—there is a fixed absolute boundary, which nothing in our ordinary experience can help us, even in imagination, to overleap." In a higher sense, therefore, than any of the other miracles, our Lord's three raisings from the dead are revelations of Divine power, and are charged with meanings more profound and far-reaching. They are pre-eminently reflections of the glory of the Incarnation. They are most difficult

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to believe and realise ; but, when accepted in simple trustfulness, they are most fraught with consolation and hope. They have drawn out the strongest opposition of hardened scepticism, and the most reverential gratitude of faith.

The law of progression, which we can trace in the miracles in general, is strikingly exhibited in this particular group. The great doctrine of individual immortality was progressively revealed to man. Clearer and fuller glimpses of it were given to certain favoured individuals in different epochs. The faint surmisings concerning a future state which we see in the earlier dispensations, brightened into ampler representations in the later ; until at last life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel. A similar advancement may be seen, looked at from a human point of view, in our Lord's three raisings from the dead ; for they were not a threefold repetition of the same miracle, but ascended by successive steps of difficulty and wonder to a glorious climax. It must be admitted, however, that no thought of such a gradation appears to have entered the minds of the

Evangelists, by whom one miracle seems to have been regarded as easy or as difficult as another; and Strauss has taken advantage of the orthodox admission of progress in these miracles as favouring his theory of Christian myth-making. Still, it is lawful to apply this ascending scale to them, for Scripture itself irresistibly suggests it; and we believe that the death-bed, the bier, the tomb witnessed the gradually unfolding manifestation of the power of Him in whom the Divinity was ever present and ever active, not only co-existent but co-efficient. In the first case death had only seized its victim; in the second the sorrowing mother was on her way to commit the body of her only son to the grave; and in the third the corpse had been deposited for several days in the tomb. Our Lord called back to life, first, a child, later a young man, and lastly a man in the prime and vigour of his days. And, rising thus one above the other, these increasing miracles pointed forward to, and prepared the way for, the mightier miracle of Christ's resurrection, in their own day; and now they point us onward further still, to the stupendous miracle of the general resur-



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rection of the dead at the last day—which will put the cope stone upon the glorious work of the new creation.

Like the symbolical rites of the Levitical law, which served a temporary purpose, the miracles of restoration from the dead have passed away ; but, like these rites, they have their permanent place and purpose in Revelation. They shine as “a light in a dark place,” as a taper in the chamber of suffering during the long weary watches of the night, to which we do well to give heed till the day dawn. They are demonstrations to us that all the prophecies which describe the putting an end for ever to the unnatural thing, death, and the bringing back of the true deathless nature shall be fulfilled. In the light of these ascending miracles, we read the great truth which they teach, that, as the first act of the new creation was the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, so the last act of the new creation will be the immortal union of the redeemed soul and spirit with the renewed body fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ. In the light of these

miracles we take courage; for they tell us that our life is not like the march of prisoners sentenced to death, led irresistibly along to the fatal spot where all shall be ended for ever, but an Emmaus-journey—a walk with Christ—in which we shall overstep the grave, and continue our immortal progress in that bright world in which there shall be no more death, completely attaining the archetype towards which our life here has been one long reaching out. In the light of these miracles we rejoice; for as the dead who were raised on earth were restored to the friends that were nearest and dearest, and surrounded when they awoke by all the tender and hallowed associations of home, so we shall open our eyes beyond the grave, not in a solitary state, and in a strange unknown scene, but in what we shall feel to be a true home, and in the midst of the faithful hearts and the familiar faces that we loved and lost. God in these miracles has crowned our human affections with the highest glory, and made them the pledges of their own immortality. “If a man die, shall he live again?

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All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."



CHAPTER I.

*THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.*

ST. MARK V. 21 TO THE END.

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him : and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name ; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death : I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed ; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him ; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up ; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And, Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes ? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me ? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead : why troublest thou the Master any further ? As soon as Jesus heard the word that had been spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked ; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it ; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

See also St. Matthew ix. 18-27, and St. Luke viii. 41 to the end.

## CHAPTER I.

### *THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.*

VERY lonely and deserted is the present aspect of the whole region around the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Much of the old beauty of nature still remains ; but there are few or no inhabitants ; and frequent ruins mark the sites of populous places whose very names have been forgotten. The Saviour's words of doom regarding the principal towns of this part of Galilee have been fulfilled to the very letter ; and the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of that beautiful plain which was well watered everywhere as a garden of the Lord, has overtaken Bethsaida and Chorazin, planted in the midst of scenery even more fertile and lovely, on the shores of a lake whose peculiar physical features resemble in a remarkable degree those of its sister-sea in the south. In the days of our Lord, however, this region was the

focus of all the life and activity of the Holy Land. Here were concentrated the largest masses of the population; the rich resources of the lake and of the surrounding country affording them abundant food and occupation. During the three years of His public ministry, Jesus made this garden of Palestine His home. Nowhere else could He who came to preach Divine truth to the weary and heavy-laden; and to seek and save that which was lost, have found such a suitable sphere for His labours of self-denying love. Nowhere else could He have found such numerous representatives of all the races, occupations, and experiences of mankind, ready to be influenced by His many-sided, world-wide gospel. Amid the ceaseless toil and turmoil of its teeming villages and busy waters He wrought the blessed works of Him that sent Him, and revealed the bright hopes of His kingdom to cheer the wretchedness of humanity.

It was to this scene of crowded life that Jesus returned from the comparatively desolate eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, from which the terrified inhabitants, smarting under the loss of their swine, had besought him to depart. Hardly had He stepped upon the pebbly strand from the boat, and passed through the fringe of willow-like oleanders which adorned the water's edge, than He found Himself in



the midst of a crowd waiting for His arrival. St. Matthew interposes several incidents here; but St. Mark informs us that, immediately after landing, and while speaking to the people, a man, whose dress and appearance marked him out as a member of the upper ranks of Jewish society, came hastily forward, and saluted Him in the Eastern manner by prostrating himself upon the ground at His feet. The name of this man was Jairus, and he was one of the prefects or rulers, in all probability of the synagogue of Capernaum. Scripture tells us nothing of his previous history. He is brought before our notice solely in connection with the wonderful work wrought upon his daughter. He was doubtless well acquainted with the person and reputation of Jesus, for Capernaum was the place of our Lord's abode for a time sufficiently long to admit of its being called His own city. In its synagogue He often worshipped and taught, and the wonderful discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel was spoken within its walls. Many of His mighty works were wrought in the city or in the immediate neighbourhood. Jairus had doubtless often heard those gracious words, and seen those wonderful miracles, which had raised the city to the highest elevation in point of privilege and honour. What impression they had produced upon

him when all was well with him we know not, but in the hour of sorrow he remembered the power and kindness of this extraordinary man, and hastened to seek His aid. Affliction had given him greater spiritual insight than usual; and, feeling himself to be in the presence of a superior being, his salutation was not a mere customary formality of eastern greeting, but a distinct act of worship, a recognition of the claims of Jesus to the highest reverence on account of His holiness and authority. And, considering the position of a ruler of the synagogue, to whom the Jews looked up with great respect, this act of homage is a striking proof of the high estimation in which Jesus was held at that time, even by those of most exalted rank. It has been suggested, indeed, that on a former occasion Jairus had come into contact with Jesus, had been a member of the deputation who urged Jesus to grant the request of the Roman centurion, on the ground of his love to the Jews, and his munificence in building for them a synagogue. If so, he who pleaded then for another, now pleads for himself, and experience of former help emboldens his present appeal.

Without waiting for any questioning as to the object of his coming, in faltering accents, broken and rendered incoherent by bursts of grief, he besought Jesus to

come with him at once to his house. He said he had a little daughter at home so seriously ill that he knew not whether she was at that moment living or dead. He had left her apparently at the point of death, and he entreated Jesus to hasten to her, if perchance life yet remained, for he knew that if He did but lay His hand upon her she would be restored. St. Luke tells us that the little daughter of Jairus was his only child, and that she was about twelve years of age. Upon her all the affections of her parents' hearts were doubtless concentrated. She was the joy and the sunbeam of their home, whose presence set their life to music, and brought back to them the gladness and innocence of their own young days. She filled the vista of every hope, and formed the subject of every dream of the future which they cherished. She had arrived at that age which is fullest of interest, when the bud of childhood is about to open and to disclose the hidden beauties and mysterious possibilities of life. She was in the transition state between the passive simplicity of the child and the settled independence of womanhood ; still clinging with unquestioning trustfulness to the past, and with unchanged love to the old ties and associations of home, but casting out tendrils of hope and wistful thought to the mystic future stretching before her, with all its unknown ex-

periences and untried responsibilities. The heaven of her infancy brooded over her still, full as ever of the old tenderness; but a new life was about to dawn upon her out of its horizon. And with this dawning of a higher consciousness upon her young mind, this first awakening of an interest in real life and history, would come the seriousness which, like the bloom on the fruit, is one of the greatest charms of youth, one of the most beautiful of God's inspirations.

The twelfth year we know was a marked period in the life of a Jewish youth. He was then called by a title which means "son of the law," and from that period he began to bear a part in the various duties prescribed by the Levitical law, to go up to Jerusalem and worship at all the great festivals. It was at this age that our Lord Himself paid His first visit to Jerusalem, and was found by His disconsolate parents, who had missed Him on their homeward journey, in the temple questioning the learned doctors regarding the significant events of Jewish history, and the great rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses. We know not if a similar custom prevailed in regard to Jewish maidens, but it is extremely likely that it did. For women it was prescribed, not by the law of Moses, but by the traditions of the elders, that they should go up to Jerusalem once a year to the Passover.

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And in all probability the daughter of Jairus had come to that age, when her parents could take her with them on their annual journey from Capernaum to Jerusalem, to keep the greatest of all the Jewish feasts. And doubtless she had looked forward to this first visit to the sacred city, with all the excitement and enthusiasm with which a child contemplates its first departure from its quiet home to the busy scenes of the great world, of which it has formed the most romantic pictures. Brought up in the house of a ruler of the synagogue, her aspirations would doubtless find a congenial atmosphere in which to breathe. She would be taught to cherish, from her childhood, a feeling of reverence towards all those sacred things which were the heritage of her race; and perhaps to look forward with eager hope to the fulfilment of that great promise of the Messiah, which, like a golden thread, ran through and united and harmonized all the wonderful chapters of her nation's history. She must have heard her father and his brother officials often speak about the temple, which was the sign of God's dwelling amongst His people, and about the sacrifices always smoking upon the altars, and about the priests, and the learned scribes, and lawyers, whose sacred labours invested the place with a halo of almost Divine solemnity. Year after

year she had watched with growing interest and yearnings the departure of her parents, as they went up to behold all these wonders and take part in all these services. And the time at length had come when she herself was about to go up as a worshipper, and see with her own eyes what she had heard with her ears. But, alas! a blight from heaven fell upon her high hopes and expectations. A fatal sickness came and closed the opening bud of her young life. And now death was about to summon her to a longer pilgrimage, to a more sacred city, and to higher services than those which formed the subject of her bright dreams; and for her the promise of the Messiah would be in vain. What this sickness which seemed to be unto death meant to the parents, no father's or mother's heart can have any difficulty in understanding. I have seen a man who had all of life's blessings which this world could bestow, wiping the death-dews from a fair young face that was soon to be an angel's, crying out in heart-broken accents, "Oh! my God, take all that I have, but leave me my child." Such must have been the feeling in the heart of Jairus when he came to Jesus. All the glory of the world was stripped off by the crowning calamity which had darkened his home and heart. Rank, wealth, social and religious consideration, all the things

which he prized before, were made in a moment as barren of interest and beauty, as a garden in November on which has fallen the first black frost of winter.

The very fact that Jairus had left his daughter to seek the help of Jesus, when her life was ebbing so fast away, shows how urgent was his necessity. With death standing so close, ready to snatch his child from his arms, he could not, in ordinary circumstances, have left her side for a moment. He could not afford to lose a single look of that dear face that would soon be hid from him in the darkness of death; a single tone of the sweet voice which would soon be hushed in the silence of the grave. This unspeakably precious residue of life would require to be made the most of; for no hand could turn the hour-glass of time when the golden sands had run out. And yet, with a wonderful self-denial, he had surrendered the last sad moments of love's farewell for this hope—desperate as it might seem—of getting his daughter altogether restored to his arms, and the shadow of death put back many degrees on the dial of life. “And when he saw him, he fell at his feet and besought him greatly, saying, Master, my little daughter lieth at the point of death, I pray thee come and lay thy hands upon her that she may be healed, and she shall live.”

The words "and besought him greatly" indicate the wild urgency of Jairus' petition, and not the Saviour's hesitation or indifference. They describe the measure of Jairus' fear, and not the measure of the Saviour's pity. Jesus did not need to be besought. The slightest whisper would have sufficed. From the sight of suffering He never averted His eyes coldly; to the cry of distress He never turned a deaf ear. And, therefore, He who made Himself known to men in His highest glory through a fellowship with their miseries, rose immediately and went away with the broken-hearted father to the home where he expected to see his worst fears confirmed. Nor did they go alone. The disciples of Jesus also accompanied them; and the people who had been listening to His teaching followed in their train, curious to see the end. As they passed along, the crowd increased to such an extent that they filled entirely the narrow way, and pressed unpleasantly upon Jesus and upon His companion, who could not move on as fast as his terrible anxiety urged him. While they are thus struggling with the multitude, a woman, on whose emaciated countenance are the traces of severe suffering, and whose form is feeble with want and poorly clad, is borne unresistingly along in the surging crowd, like a foam-flake on the crest of a dark billow. She seems among the eager



multitude as much out of place as a fragile Alpine flower, blanched by the wind and snow to a ghostly paleness, borne down from the mountains by its native stream into the midst of the gaudy wild flowers of the meadows. She had heard the fame of Jesus as a wonder-worker, healing diseases which had previously baffled the most skilful remedies, and of His great kindness to the poor, treating their various troubles with uniform tenderness, and sending none who applied to Him away unaided. A sudden hope springs up in her weary heart that this wonderful Being may do for her what no other one had been able to do. Poor and unfriended, having spent for twelve long years upon physicians, as we are touchingly told, all her living—the little hoard which she had carefully saved up for a time of need—and her disease still as active as ever, nay, aggravated by the painfulness of the attempted remedies; her case is indeed one that is well-fitted to arrest the eye and excite the tenderness of the compassionate Redeemer. In the ebb and flow of the crowd she finds herself close to Him. With trembling awe, feeling her own unworthiness in the presence of one so good and great, unwilling to divert Him for a moment from His solemn purpose, or to direct the attention of the multitude to herself, she comes behind Him, and, stooping down modestly,

shrinkingly touches the hem of His garment as it trails on the ground, saying within herself, "If I may but touch His garment, I shall be made whole."

There was a moral significance in the hem of a Jew's garment. According to the Mosaic law, it required to be bound with a ribbon of blue, as a memorial of God's goodness to Israel, and a reminder of the debt of gratitude which they owed Him. Like all ordinances addressed to the senses, this custom, however, failed in the course of ages to fulfil its wise purpose; for the Pharisees enlarged the blue ribbon, and made broad their phylacteries, in order that they might receive praise from men for their scrupulous adherence to the mere letter of the law. Our Saviour Himself in all likelihood wore this significant blue fringe on the border of His woven and seamless coat; for every command of the law was sacred to Him, and, in speaking of the custom of His nation, it was the abuse and not the use that He condemned. It is possible that the woman of Capernaum may have been prompted to touch the hem of Christ's garment, not merely because that was the part of it which lay nearest to her, and which she could most easily reach, but also, because she attributed a peculiar virtue to it from its sacred associations. Be this, however, as it may, the deed is at least significant of

ardent faith and profound humility; and it has an instantaneous reward. No one notices her action; no one knew her necessity. Her sorrow and her hope are both sealed up in her own heart, and no stranger can intermeddle with them. But no sooner does her hand come into contact with the robe of Jesus than the ebb of life ceases, and she knows in herself that she is cured. Though contact with one afflicted like her would have caused ceremonial uncleanness till the evening, that single touch through faith of Him whom nothing can defile, and who passed like a sunbeam through all the pollutions of earth, has purified her, and done what the waste of all her substance spent upon earthly physicians could not do. Even amid the pressure of the crowd, Jesus felt that one magnetic touch of faith which drew healing virtue out of Him. And we may well suppose that He who took pleasure in the centurion's confidence, and the Magdalen's love, and the Samaritan leper's gratitude, and the devotion of Mary of Bethany, despised and rejected of men as He commonly was, must have also rejoiced, as a foretaste of the joy set before Him, in the signal proof of confidence in Him given by this poor lone woman. When she had touched Him and was healed, He turned round and caused the sunshine of His loving countenance to shine upon her.

He did not wish to turn the eyes of the crowd upon her to embarrass her and aggravate her pain, until she had felt the sense of the happy wonder that had been wrought upon her, and, in the new strength of her cure, was lifted above all morbid shame. And now, He will not suffer her to remain in concealment any longer, to go away in this stolen, impersonal, unrecognising way. By a searching question and a gracious force He causes her to come forward out of the crowd, and reveal herself all trembling and blushing with gratitude and awe. She tells all the truth, not to Jesus only, but before all the people; she discloses the secret source of her impurity as well as its cure. The work of faith is perfected by open confession; and therefore, before all the people, Jesus bestowed upon her that higher spiritual blessing, of which the healing of the body was the outward emblem and preparation, and which would be an overflowing fountain of joy in her heart to her dying day.

This incident in itself, and apart from its circumstances, is exceedingly suggestive. But there is one special doctrine which it illustrates and enforces in a very striking way, viz., that Salvation is a simple, easy thing; or, in other words, that a very small part of Gospel truth is sufficient to save the soul. The poor woman with the issue of blood did not know Christ

intimately like St. Peter or St. John. She had probably never seen Him before. We know not even if she saw His face until she was healed, for we are told that she stole up behind Him. She did not embrace Him in her arms, or hold His hand, or press directly against His body. She did not hear Him preach, or see Him perform a miracle. She only touched the hem of His garment, the most distant point in connection with Him. And the faith that prompted her to do this, though a most real faith, was perhaps imperfect in its form, based upon a superstitious idea, upon an erroneous estimate of the manner in which the healing power of Christ was exerted. And yet, through the channel of that imperfect faith, and by that slightest of all possible contact with Jesus, healing virtue flowed from Him to her; and she who at first merely touched His garment from behind, in the end saw His face, heard His voice, was called, Ruth-like, His daughter—an expression used here alone in the whole New Testament, Jesus calling even His mother and Mary Magdalene “woman”—and gladdened with the fulness of that peculiar blessing given only to one other person in the Gospel narrative. And does not this show to us, as in a parable, that a very slight knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, if there be faith to apprehend and love to receive and act upon it, may be sufficient

to save and restore the soul,—may lead to the greatest and most blessed spiritual results? Does it not show to us that God tests faith not by a balance, but by a magnet; that it is not the quantity, but the quality of it, that He values?

In its relation to the other miracle which Jesus was on His way to perform, this parenthetic cure teaches us the precious lesson, that even in His movement to a given point and a great end, God may be interrupted by the appeal of human necessity. Jesus, who revealed the Father's heart and method of working, shows to us here, by His own conduct, the connection of man's wants and longings with the great purposes of God in the administration of the universe. We are accustomed to hear, in these days, that there is nothing in the world but uninterrupted physical causation, ploughing its way remorselessly towards the accomplishment of that far-off event to which the whole creation moves; that soul is but a function of the brain, and God a metaphor for force; or that, if there be an Almighty Being, He is so absorbed in the world that all idea of His Divine personality is destroyed. Students of science tell us that the laws of nature are fixed and unalterable,—that they carry to the end, without any possibility of deviation or interruption, the intentions of God. These laws have

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no special word or exclusive look for us, nothing to make us feel that we are present individually, with all our wants and sorrows, before the Infinite Mind. He has chosen to proceed in His dealings with His creatures according to a regular and uniform order, which He does not break, with which He does not interfere, simply because a frail foolish mortal may ask Him to do so. But the revelation of the Bible has been given us for the very purpose of correcting these false notions of God's method of administration. And I believe that one of the great ends which the miracle within a miracle at Capernaum was designed to serve, is just to show to us that prayer has its own place and value in this great system of law and order, and that human need can turn aside to itself the Power that is carrying on the general work of the world. He who stood still on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, and though His face was steadfastly set to go up to the cross, there to work out the salvation of mankind, waited until the blind man was brought to Him to be cured; He who found leisure and tranquility to perform a beneficent act on the way to Jairus' house, though the business that awaited Him was one of life and death; was the same who in former times had interrupted the continuous flow of the sea that His people might pass through in safety.

and in still older times, when there were no human beings in existence, had made frequent breaks in nature's movements in order that higher creations might be ushered upon the scene. And He is the same now who makes a silence in heaven's choral symphonies to listen to the crying of His children, and rises from His throne of glory, as Stephen saw Him in vision, to help His saints in their extremity, and pauses, as it were, in the mightiest operations of His hands in order to minister to the necessities of the poorest sufferer. We cannot surrender the idea that in this great chronology of the universe, which comprehends the times and the seasons of all created things, the orbits and revolutions of stars and systems, there are truly "years of the right hand of the most High" for each of us individually,—that in this vast totality of correlated forces and laws, of which we form a part, there are special providences and particular answers to prayer, and proofs which cannot be doubted, that God is thinking of us, not only as present somewhere in the vast whole of His thought, but as individuals known by name, and whom He is personally leading out, and healing, and blessing. There is a law in our minds deeper and more unchanging than any physical law, that wars with the inference which some scientific men derive from the direct



unvaried operations of the universe, that there can be no special movement in nature, or any interruption of its totality. And upon this mysterious something within us that demands the supernatural, and creates a disposition to believe in it—which is as much a part of our spiritual constitution as the habitual belief in nature's regularity itself, is built the motive and encouragement to prayer, and the assurance that our prayer will be heard and answered. God is my Father, and through Christ I know that I am His child—His little child, and knowing little—and that I cannot lay hold, with however trembling a heart, or with however slight and timid a touch, upon the hem of His garment of glory, as it sweeps down to my lowly place from the high altitude of Infinity, without drawing love from His heart and power from His arm, and making Him pause to consider my case, and to lift on me the light of His gracious countenance, just as if there were no more important wants than mine in the whole universe.

We are apt to look upon the healing of the woman with the issue of blood as an interruption of the history of the raising of the daughter of Jairus; as a separate and distinct incident altogether. But there is in reality the closest connection between the two events. They are brought together by all the Evan-

gelist, not only because they occurred at the same time and in the same association, but because they mutually help to explain one another. If we put them together, like the two pictures in a stereoscopic slide, we shall have a better idea of the wonderful unity and harmony of the whole narrative. The two miracles fit in a striking way into each other. The beginning of the woman's plague was coeval with the maiden's birth. The one had suffered for twelve years before she was made whole, the other had lived twelve years when she fell asleep in death to awake to a new life. And is not the character of Jairus brought out clearly in contrast, with that of the woman? We see the stronger faith of the woman, content with only the minimum of means, with the remotest and slightest contact with Jesus, believing that the very hem of His garment had power to heal; and the weaker, more irresolute, faith of Jairus, which needed personal recognition and the support of sympathising words, and demanded that Jesus should visit his daughter, and could not compass the thought that He could heal at a distance, and restore when the vital spark had fled. Indeed, we observe in the woman a peculiar energy, not only of faith, but of character, as shown by the resoluteness of her striving after a cure for twelve years, and spending all her means in the

attempt, and her exertion in forcing her way to the person of Jesus; an energy which we do not find in Jairus. We see the profound humility and shrinking modesty of the woman, coming up unobserved behind Christ in the crowd, and wishing to glide away silent as a shadow unknown and unnoticed; and the ostentation of Jairus, coming openly to Christ in the face of the crowd, and uttering his petition in the hearing of all, having messengers sent to him, and having hired mourners in his house making a loud lamentation for the dead, although much of this of course was rendered necessary by the different nature of his trouble. Jairus needed the discipline of the woman's cure. It prepared him for the miracle that was about to be wrought for himself. It strengthened his faith, it tried his patience, it made him less selfish; and seeing the wondrous effect produced upon the woman by the mere touch of Christ's garment, it kindled a hope that a greater thing would be done for himself by the touch of Jesus' hand and the sound of His voice. And it taught him the great lesson which every human being needs to learn, that the blessings of Divine grace, whether as regards the soul or body, are not individual, but social,—that no man can be saved exclusively, but his salvation is bound up in that of others.

But, whatever effect the miracle might have pro-

duced upon him, the delay which it involved must have been a sore trial to the anxious father, when every moment was precious, and the time when all action, as he thought, would be unavailable was fast passing away. Think of the house of mourning during this tarrying; for doubtless Jairus had told his wife of his intention to seek the help of Jesus! Can we not recall in our own experience something of what the anxious mother must have been feeling, while death was shaking the last few sands in the hour-glass of her daughter's life, and no help was near? Do we not all remember a time of despair when we wrestled with death for the possession of our beloved, and strove with all our might to retain the fleeting breath, so inexpressibly dear; when we tried in turn each expedient we could think of to arrest the inevitable doom, only to abandon it immediately as useless—crushed by the sense of our own impotency and of the sense of what was coming upon us, and stung almost into impious outcries against Providence? Oh! life has no such awful experience as the agony of those moments when we watch for the physician, upon whom our last hope is fixed, and he cometh not; and every minute of suspense seems like an age of misery. Jesus tarried while this distress was running on, and tried the faith of father and mother,

just as He tried the faith of the sisters of Lazarus, when they beheld their beloved brother drawing near to the grave, and still no word of the Lord for whom they had sent. The delay was in the plan of His lovingkindness, and essential to its full development. It formed part of the preparation He was making to give the parents a plenteous redemption,—to bless them according to the fulness of His own loving heart. The string was tuned to its tightest tension, that it might sound the true note of heavenly music when Christ's miraculous finger should touch it. There was discipline in waiting; and Jairus doubtless found afterwards that only those who have been alone days and nights with deepest sorrow are capable of experiencing joy of the loftiest kind.

The narrative reveals to us no sign of impatience on the part of the father. However great the trial, he kept it to himself. The dull, heavy, constant pain in his heart made him silent, after the first wild burst in which he had poured out all the longing and sorrow of his soul. But, while Jesus was yet speaking to the woman, there came messengers from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?" They believed that it was too late now to do any good. There was no use in Jesus fatiguing Himself

with a journey which could only end in bitter disappointment. They believed that Jesus could save *from* death, but they could not rise to the higher faith that He could save *in* death. He could fan, they knew, from the analogy of other miracles which He had wrought, the last expiring embers of life into a flame; but they had no foundation for expecting that He could rekindle the spark of life when it had gone out in darkness altogether. And Jairus would have shared their hopelessness had not Jesus interfered before nature gave way. As soon as the dreadful tidings of his bereavement came, and before any doubts could arise in his heart, the preventing mercies of Jesus preoccupied him. Just as He stretched out His hand to Peter amid the wild waters of Gennesaret, so here the Master stretched out His almighty arm to uphold the poor father as he was sinking in the pitiless calamity, and all its bitter waves were about to close over him. "Fear not, only believe, and she shall live." In His anxiety to prevent the extinction of that faith, without which the miracle of restoration could not be wrought, He fulfilled the words of the prophet, "And it shall come to pass, before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." And does not this anticipating of the paralysing effect of the tidings upon the father, and preventing it

beforehand by a word of confidence and encouragement, rebuke the thoughts we sometimes cherish of God, as if He were a jealous oriental despot, one who must have all His titles of honour or He will not hear us, His full tale of importunity or He will not answer? It is not *when* we pour out our souls in strong crying and tears that His interest in us and work for us begins. It is *before* we have realised our need, and *when* we know nothing of the help which He brings, that He comes by all the agencies of His love to heal and comfort us. It was when Adam hid himself from God that God sought him; it was Jehovah Himself who, when He saw us ruined and undone by sin, devised means whereby His banished ones might be brought back to Him. The marvellous plan of mercy sprung from His own bosom; and this not only before repentance or sorrow for sin had been displayed by man, but even before he fell. And this *preventing* mercy of God, which is so precious a feature in the salvation of the Gospel, is a most comforting and supporting element in all the trials of life. As soon as the tidings of woe come, so soon does the Comforter graciously preoccupy our minds and hearts with the consolations of grace. Did Jairus believe the words of hope? Did he trust in the Power he had besought to help him in his extremity? We do not know; per-

haps he himself did not know. He was stunned for the moment by the blow that had fallen upon him ; or he was in that painful state of conflict in which the mind, still cherishing some prospect of deliverance, cannot on that account fully arm itself with patience, nor centre itself in submission. The throbbings and pulsations of a feverish hope disturb the calm effects which one absorbing object, however distressing—which the acquiescence in his daughter's death—would naturally have produced. But Jesus left His words, like seeds of hope, to germinate and develop their fulness of meaning in his heart, as silently they hurried on together towards the darkened home.

Steinmeyer places at this point our Lord's full recognition of what He had to do in this case. It was merely to cure a *sick* child that He had set out on His journey. He had not intended to raise the daughter of Jairus from the dead, but to preserve her from dying. He did not here, as in the case of Lazarus, in which the glory of God was to be specially shown by a raising from the dead, deliberately put off His departure until death had actually occurred ; for an awakening from the dead was not, as then, His aim and end in the present case. He accompanied the father at once, when He was told of the serious illness of his daughter ; and He did not intentionally



linger on the way ; the delay that occurred being unavoidable, caused by a cure which was in a manner thrust upon Jesus, and could not therefore be postponed. But, owing to this delay, the deadly sickness of the child proved unto death. Being what He was, it is obvious that He could not turn back at this stage, and disappoint the hopes which He had raised, and leave the poor father in his despair, lifted up by expectation only to be cast down into a deeper abyss of gloom than before. He could not acknowledge that His power was limited by death, as the father and the messengers supposed. He had come to give help, and He could not be prevented from doing so by any hindrance, not even by the greatest. What He had resolved upon and promised should be carried through, even though death itself stood in the way. This, then, was the motive which constrained Him to perform the miracle. His raising of the dead was not an arbitrary, capricious act. It was extremely rare ; and in each case He had the most powerfully constraining motives to induce Him to perform it. We see in the present example the full nature of the necessity laid upon Him. We see how naturally, by the very force of circumstances themselves, the supreme miracle was the direct consequence of His previously declared readiness to perform the inferior

cure. And we have in this circumstance itself a most beautiful and convincing proof of the genuineness of the miracle.

Hitherto Jesus had allowed the multitude to accompany Him. Their presence did not disturb the serene composure of His spirit; and it was providentially appointed as one of the mechanical conditions for drawing out the faith of the woman with the issue of blood, giving an opportunity for its practical exercise, and thus leading to her wonderful cure. But now, when the messengers reported the death of Jairus' daughter, and He knew that the work before Him was not a curing of the sick but a raising of the dead, He suffered no man to follow Him. St. Mark tells us that He dismissed the multitude immediately after the sad tidings came to Him; and we infer that He walked the remaining distance to the house accompanied only by the father and the messengers and His own disciples. The nature of the work before Him required that it should be done in a stillness, with which the presence of a rude crowd would have been incompatible; and, with a thoughtful consideration for what was becoming to the occasion, He would not bring a multitude of strangers, moved only by curiosity, even to the outside of the house of death.

When they reached the house, they found it full of hired minstrels and neighbours who had come in to join them, who were all beating upon their breast and wailing and lamenting the dead. The most marked feature of Oriental mourning was its studied publicity. There was none of that sacred reticence and solemn retirement which characterise the usages of western and modern nations. All the ceremonies appropriate to the occasion were carefully prescribed and observed; and their observance often made the house of mourning a scene of tumult and uproar. This ostentatious mercenary grief was peculiarly distasteful to Jesus. He rebuked it, and said, "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" Not that the expression of sorrow was in itself unwarrantable, or that He would have us refuse to weep with those that weep; far otherwise; but the loud demonstrative grief of the friends, and the affected mechanical lamentation of the hired mourners, who had no sense of sorrow or loss, disturbed the calm repose and solemn quietness which ought to characterise the house of death. Wishing to be left in peace, He said, "Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Some commentators regard these words as a distinct and explicit declaration that death had not absolutely taken place; and therefore they do not allow the raising of Jairus' daughter to be num-

bered among the true miracles of resuscitation from the dead. They look upon the little maid as being only in a deep trance, a species of catalepsy in which life had descended to the lowest point ; and they consequently regard the miracle as only a healing of the deadly disease which had thrown her into this death-like sleep. There were no external signs, indeed, to indicate that she was still alive ; all breath and motion had ceased ; all the vital functions seemed suspended ; but Jesus knew that in her case the real moment of death, which man can never ascertain, had not yet arrived. And this knowledge, which He possessed both before He came to the house and while in it, and to which He gave expression in the words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," constituted the principal miraculous element in the act of restoration. To this gratuitous assumption, however, the whole force of the narrative, as it appears to me, is opposed. Those who put it forward declare that they do so as the only escape from attributing to Jesus a manifest untruth, if He said that the daughter of Jairus was only sleeping while she was actually dead. But, by seeking to clear Him from that supposed falsehood, they virtually impute to Him a series of falsehoods. They vindicate the truth of His lips, in a single expression, by impugning the truth and consistency of His whole char-

acter and conduct. What did His word of encouragement to the father, when the tidings came to him that the spirit of his child had fled, imply, if the maiden was not actually dead? Was it not based upon the certainty of that death? Would He have left Jairus to suppose that his daughter was dead if she was all the time alive? Would He have comforted him as one who is in bitterness for an only child, if his daughter was only in a death-like asphyxia, from which she might speedily awaken? Had Jesus known that the child's life was still lingering in the socket, and yet concealed the fact, and spoken to Jairus in words that took for granted her death, and summoned him to put his trust in that Almighty Power to whom the issues from death belonged, He must have been guilty of a species of subterfuge or prevarication, the thought of which we cannot for a moment entertain regarding Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. As for the difficulty supposed to be involved in the words "She is not dead, but sleepeth," it will vanish at once when looked at from the proper point of view. These words were not meant to be understood literally. They are in entire harmony with the words which He afterwards uses regarding Lazarus, when he was not only dead but buried, and with the poetical ideas regarding death as a sleep in common

use among all nations. Our Lord did not deny that the maiden was really dead ; but He intimated that as the awakening in the morning follows the sleep of the night, so this death would be followed by an immediate resurrection. The little maiden was only sleeping so far as the issue was concerned, for she would be speedily aroused. And He who was about to raise her, and whose intention must ever be regarded as equivalent to an accomplished fact, would not call her brief visit to the silent land by the dark awful name of death, but by the sweet name of a slumber. Sleep is but a brief death, less deep, and the world of dreams is but a less happy heaven. Besides all this, it is distinctly said by St. Luke that "her spirit came again," when Jesus restored her—words which obviously necessitate the previous fact that an absolute separation between soul and body had taken place. They are precisely the same words as those used regarding the resuscitation of the widow of Zarephath's son, which no worthy commentator hesitates to believe was an actual raising from the dead.

Spinosa, the celebrated philosopher, said that if the reality of the miracle of raising Lazarus from the grave could be demonstrated, he would abandon his unbelief and become a Christian. But the reality

of the miracle cannot be proved by the kind of evidence which he demanded. If any keen-eyed critic were to examine the proofs of the miracle of the restoration of Jairus' daughter, as the Evangelists have recorded it, and were to come to the conclusion that, as far as we are enabled to judge, there was nothing in it that might not have been accomplished by any ordinary physician; that it was simply the restoration of a case of catalepsy such as not unfrequently occurs in ordinary experience, in which there was a remarkable coincidence between the words of Christ and the natural termination of the trance; that there was no such testing of the reality of death and of the whole process of resuscitation such as the scientific men of this day would apply, and that therefore this incident is a very insufficient basis upon which to build the supernatural claims of Christ or our own hopes of victory over death; it would be reasonable to admit that all this is true. Our Lord did not on this occasion give the proofs which unbelief or even honest science might have asked. It would have been very easy for Him in the presence of the bystanders, first to put beyond the possibility of doubt the fact that the little maiden was dead, and then to go on to perform the miracle in such a way as to produce irresistible conviction. But

nothing of the sort was done. The conduct of Jesus on this and all occasions of a similar kind was not that of one making supernatural pretensions, and submitting them to the rigid investigation of the incredulous. He did not present Himself to men as a mere miracle-worker desiring to have his claims investigated, and there is no attempt made by Him to use His miracles as evidence after our fashion. He spoke with authority to the hearts and consciences of men, and claimed a spiritual faith and obedience. In no case can we deal with the miracles of Christ as we should deal with the more evident forces of the material world, making experiments upon them with the necessary scientific precautions, testing them, measuring them, and tabulating their results. We can never get such proof as that; and in the miracle before us, as in all the miracles, we are left to feel that the best guarantee we can have of good faith is to be found in the perfect character of our Lord Himself. We believe in His own Divine truthfulness and candour first, and then we believe in His works, however astonishing, for His sake. And surely in the case of Jairus' daughter everything is so transparently simple and open, so perfectly consistent with what we know of Christ's holiness, wisdom, and love, that we cannot possibly come to any other conclusion



than that which is expressed in the belief of all the Christian ages, that this was indeed a genuine example of restoration from death.

The words of Jesus, "Why make ye this ado and weep, she is not dead, but sleepeth," seemed to have had a twofold purpose to serve. They were meant to strengthen the hope and encourage the faith of the father, which were ready to die when all the dread sights and sounds of woe in his house made real to him the loss which before he had only half-believed. Jesus uses over again His former words of encouragement in a new form suited to the altered circumstances. He said at a distance, "Be not afraid, only believe," but now, in the presence of death, He says, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." He takes away the word of despair, and substitutes the word of hope. This death is a Shechinah cloud; it is a pillar of darkness to sense, but a pillar of light to faith; and, if only his tottering faith can hold on for a few minutes longer, the Shechinah cloud will disclose to him its heavenly brightness, and the shadow of death will be turned into the morning. And the same gracious words were also designed to test the spiritual susceptibility of the people in the house. Veiling His intention in a phrase capable of a double signification, He would prove them whether they had dis-

cernment enough to penetrate His purpose, and faith enough to believe in His power to raise the dead; and were thus worthy to behold a wonder which could only be revealed to the meek and the spiritually-minded. Whether Jairus was comforted by the words, we know not, but they failed to produce the proper impression upon the crowd of turbulent mourners. They were to them words of utter foolishness. They knew that the maiden was dead; their presence in the house was a proof of that fact which could not be gainsaid; and who was this unknown and presumptuous stranger who dared to insinuate that they were mistaken, that they were practising a deceit or a mockery, and keeping up a mere empty ceremony? "They laughed him to scorn."

He who had calmed the wild waves in their greatest fury by His will a short time before, could not hush the boisterous grief or the swelling unbelief of human hearts that had no hope. The senseless waves yielded instant homage to Him, but the souls whom He had made rose up in rebellion against Him, and disowned His power, and ridiculed His words. And, therefore, as He cast out those who profaned the temple by their unhallowed traffic, so He now cast out those who profaned the house of sorrow by their hired lamentations and sordid sympathy. They were out of keep-

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ing with a place which was soon to be a scene of life and not death; they were unworthy to witness the awful and holy mystery which was about to happen. Had they not laughed the Lord of Life to scorn, they might have been permitted to behold a sight, which would have enabled them to laugh death to scorn when their own time came to die. But they had none of the true tone and temper which became the transcendent revelation; and therefore Jesus put them all out, and restored appropriate quietness and silence to the chamber of death. He suffered none to go in with Him, save the father and mother of the maiden and three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John; the same three who on more than one later occasion were elected, on account of their stronger faith and more devoted love, to be witnesses of things concealed from the others. Jesus had now entered upon a new era of more wonderful manifestations of sorrow and joy, of which this miracle of restoration from the dead was the first and typical incident; and, for those revelations of higher mysteries, only the disciples who were in closest communion with Him, and who had imbibed most of His spirit, were fitted. Not to the general band even of those who had forsaken all and followed Him, but to the election within the election, did He make known the exceeding riches of His

power and grace. Only to those who stood nearest to the passive object and the active subject, who had the dearest interest in the dead child and the living Saviour ; only to the parents and the three most loving of all the disciples was the wonderful revelation given. To those whom He thus selected to accompany Him into the room where the dead maiden lay, He imparted something of His own calmness and serenity of demeanour ; and the quiet self-possession of His spirit, combined with the sympathising kindness of His manner, and His well-known reputation for power and wisdom, must have helped to reassure the failing hearts of those whom He came to comfort, and to make them feel that they stood in the presence of One able and willing to save to the uttermost.

This exclusion of the false, hired mourners, who had presumed to ridicule Him, and His selection of the true mourners, who had revered Him—the parents of the dead child and the three disciples most distinguished for the fervour and silent depth of their character—shows how consistently Christ acted upon His own advice, not to give that which is holy unto dogs, nor to cast pearls before swine. His conduct in the house of Jairus was of a piece with His conduct at Nazareth, where He would not do many mighty works on account of the unbelief of the inhabitants,

and with His silence before Pilate, who asked Him questions out of mere curiosity, and who, had He answered him, would have laughed at the solemn sanctions of His faith as the mere vulgar ethics of a Nazarene. And it teaches us the needed lesson that the sublime truths of our religion, and the sacred experiences of our individual Christian life, are not to be presented rashly and indiscriminately, or proclaimed to the sensual and the profane, when it is evident that no effect will be produced but to excite their scorn and contempt. The prevalent feeling that religious truth should be published everywhere, and before all, without regarding the suitability of time and place and audience, is at variance with the dignity of the Gospel and the example of Christ. We are indeed commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature, and to be instant in season and out of season; but we are at the same time enjoined to turn away from those who show themselves unmistakeably to be blasphemers and despisers, who would use the things that are dearest and most sacred to our hearts to give point to an unhallowed jest, or force to an imprecation. Every Christian is placed in circumstances in which he can only take with him a select few, who have the teachable spirit which gives the promise of the seed being received into honest and

good hearts, into the holy place where He reveals the deep things of God; and must shut the door upon those who, by a fixed course of bold and daring blasphemy, or by a brutal sensuality, have hardened themselves against the entrance of the truth. The Church cuts off from its communion those whose impenitent wickedness would profane its holy sacraments. We are not, indeed, to exclude unrenovatedness of heart, or the mere opposition of the natural mind to religion; for in that case we should never proclaim the Gospel to any mixed assembly at all; and that state may be repented of, and such persons be converted and saved. But we have no right, for the sake of any hypothetical or improbable issue of good, to fling the Gospel again at the feet of those who have already received it only to pollute it, as dogs would the holy sacrifices of the temple, or to trample it under foot as swine would pearls. And if this rejection of the persistent scoffer and the hardened infidel who will not listen should circumscribe our sphere of labour, there are thousands now perishing for lack of knowledge who will welcome the glad tidings of salvation; and "we shall not have gone over all the field that is open to us legitimately before the Son of Man has come to summon us from our labours."

And now Jesus stands beside the bed, whereon reposes the marble-like form of the little maiden, whose fair sunny life death has quenched with his cold kiss. The pale lily-like hands are crossed on the still bosom, and the dark curls cluster motionless around the wasted cheek, like the shadow of a cloud on a wreath of snow. It is a well-known and yet an unknown face, so heavenly beautiful that it seems less like a human corpse than that fair shape in which a dead hope has clothed itself:—

“Just so young but yesternight,  
Now she is as old as death ;  
Much obedient in your sight,  
Gentle to a look or breath.

Only on last Monday, yours,  
Answering you like silver-bells  
Lightly touched—an hour matures,  
You can teach her nothing else.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth  
Down her patient locks of silk,  
Cold and passive as in truth  
You your fingers in spilt milk

Drew along a marble floor ;  
But her lips you cannot wring  
Into saying a word more,  
Yes ! or No !—or such a thing.

Tho' you call and beg and wreak  
Half your soul out in a shriek,  
She will lie there in default  
And most innocent revolt.”

If this be death, then is death the image of sleep, perfect heavenly sleep. Gazing upon such a beloved face, on whose lips the departing spirit has left its smile, we cannot think the thing death. We have a spontaneous, irresistible feeling that the form lying there is not the child or friend that we knew and loved. The old familiar look, the true likeness, it may be, of years ago, that was obliterated by wasting pain and weary illness, has reappeared in perfect calmness and ideal beauty, but it does not produce the effect of our loved one's living presence upon us. We have the form unchanged, and every feature of the face the same, but we miss the personality. The visible presence only makes more vivid the sense of actual absence. We had often before watched our beloved ones in sleep or in a swoon, and had seen the eye as firmly closed, and the limbs as motionless, and the breath as imperceptible, and the face as fixed and expressionless; but we never had the peculiar sensation which we have now. And this indefinable impression that our beloved one is not there, that we are gazing upon a mere relinquished garment, a shrine in which service is over, the chanting hushed and the aisle deserted, is an instinct for which we cannot account, but which is universally recognized, and is one of the strongest and most



satisfactory of all proofs of the life that survives death.

Through the hushed stillness the wailing of the hired mourners is heard outside, while the mother's head is bowed down on the body of her dead child, and the form of the father is standing near quivering with suppressed sobs. It is a touching sight, familiar, alas ! to all of us, on which the disciples gaze with speechless pity, and which moves to the quick the tender sensibility of Him who best knows what human grief is. There is a solemn pause. Jesus stands, where we have often stood, absorbed in thought, looking down upon the face of the dead. He knows the secrets of death ; and perhaps He felt for a moment reluctant to call the child back to the sufferings and changes of earth, when her spirit had landed safely on the eternal shore. But the occasion is too solemn for speculation, and the halo of Divine holiness around the Saviour's brow forbids us to form conjectures regarding what is passing through His mind. Slowly He takes in His own the unresisting hand of the maiden, so pathetic in its transparent thinness ; while the grief-struck parents are hushed into a strange expectant awe. He does not shrink from touching the dead, although such contact was forbidden by the Jewish law, and entailed upon the transgressor ceremonial

death and exclusion from the fellowship of the living. In this incident we see represented the immense difference between the acts of Christ as a Creator and a Redeemer. He created the world by a word. He said from His sublime elevation above all the works of His hands, "Let there be light." But as the Redeemer of the lost world, He had to come into closest contact with the works of His hands; He had to assume the nature which He had formed, to be made under the law which He had given, to incur the penalty which He had imposed. He had to take the dead body of humanity by the hand, and die in doing so the shameful and painful death of the cross, before He could restore it to spiritual and eternal life. And we must further consider the taking of the damsel by the hand as an outward symbolical act, indicating that only by the inward spiritual union of faith between the soul and Christ can His life overcome its death. We must come into personal individual contact with Jesus. We must touch Him, else He will not cleanse our impurity and heal our disease. He must touch us, else our death will not be changed into everlasting life.

Very tender is the word in which Jesus addresses the dead child, as if she were still living. St. Mark alone records the original Aramaic expression, "Talitha

cumi," which had doubtless been indelibly impressed upon the memory of St. Peter, from whom St. Mark, who was his special friend and companion, must have obtained it. And the original expression is recorded, because it cannot be translated without losing much of its charm and significance. It contains a term of endearment derived from a Syrian word signifying "lamb," often applied by fond parents to their children. It is as if the Good Shepherd had said, in bringing back in His bosom to the fold of the living, this lost lamb that had wandered into the land of forgetfulness, "My little lamb, I say unto thee, arise." It was no mere magic formula, no incantation of a magician, but the fond, loving, pitiful word of One whose human heart was touched by the sight of so much innocence, that looked like one of the angels of His own heaven, and wrung with grief that so much hope and beauty should have been blighted so early by the destroyer. It is like the endearing untranslatable word "Abba," by which the believer expresses to his Heavenly Father his child-like love and confidence. And how sweet is the thought that we can sound with our own sinful and polluted lips the very same beautiful words, which fell so softly and tenderly from the Saviour's holy lips beside the youthful dead. By that word of love,

and that touch of power, the spirit is re-called from the everlasting spring, and the hills of myrrh, to the forsaken tabernacle. The wave of life rushes back to the quiet heart, the pulse is set beating anew; a warm glow diffuses itself through the frame and mantles on the cheeks and lips. Through the soft eyes unsealed and vivified the soul looks out in innocent wonder, and the fair form becomes instinct once more with life and health. She rises from her couch as from a profound dreamless sleep, in mute astonishment at the strange scene around her. All the feebleness of her illness is gone, for St. Mark informs us that she not only arose, but walked; the whole marvellous scene, with all its details, living after long years in the mind of the eye-witness, who told him the story. The old life, with all its familiar associations and memories, is linked on with the new, and the dread mysterious interval is unknown or forgotten. The sun of her life—as happens in the natural world on the borders of the arctic regions in summer—just dipped below the horizon for a little, and then rose again; and dawn and sunset shone in the same sky.

It was an unparalleled display of Divine power, and our Saviour might have retired immediately in the glory of the miracle, leaving an after-glow of overwhelming astonishment and awe behind Him. But

no ! the compassionate Jesus showed not only Divine power in raising the dead, but also human sympathy with the weakness of the living. He who was touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, who hungered after His long fast in the wilderness, and thirsted in the sultry noon beside Sychar's well, knew that the frail young form which He had restored to life was exhausted with long abstinence ; that food, for which after recovery from fever there is an inordinate craving, was necessary to nourish and strengthen the emaciated body. His watchful eye saw the feebleness of nature, and His tender heart prompted the relief, "He commanded to give her meat." He did not leave this duty to the unassisted prompting of natural affection, not even to the fine and delicate instincts of a mother's love. Carried away by the first impulses of astonishment and delight at thus unexpectedly receiving their lost treasure back from those gates of death, which they had never before seen opening outwards, they might have forgotten such a humble and commonplace necessity as the allaying of hunger. In the presence of such a great joy irradiating heaven and earth for them, the ordinary wants of life might appear insignificant and incongruous. Who could think of descending from so great an altitude of wonder and rapture all at once to the preparing and serving of

meat? And yet here, in what might seem the anti-climax of the miracle, we see most strikingly displayed the key-stone that completes it; we see the superiority of the Saviour's love over man's love, its wonderful thoroughness and minuteness. It is perfect love. It can not only die on the cross for the beloved object, but it can stoop to wash its feet. It can not only work a stupendous miracle in its behalf, but also enter into its humblest bodily wants. And it is this exquisite blending of the Divine and the human, of the great and the little, in His love that makes Him just the Friend and the Saviour that we need.

His conduct on this occasion is typical of all that He does in creation, providence, and redemption. He does not deal in generalities; He does not regard things merely in the mass, and on a grand scale, but condescends to the smallest and most insignificant details. He not only decks the sky with all the glories of sunrise and sunset, and the starry splendours of midnight; but also paints with richest beauty the smallest flower that blushes unseen in the desert. Not only does He clothe the monarch mountain that rises nearest to heaven with a regal robe of purple light; but He also makes a scene of enchantment, by the combination of a few simple elements, in the deepest recess of the wood or the loneliest nook of the valley.

From the eagle whose shadow falls like a cloud upon the Alpine height, to the blazoned butterfly that hovers like a winged blossom over a wild flower; from man, the head of creation and heir of all the ages, to the minutest animalcule to which a drop of water is a crystalline world, we find in every link of that great life-series the most abundant and wonderful proofs of God's particular attention to the least of His works. We hear it said that the Almighty is concerned in the grander affairs of the world—the revolutions of the globe, the destinies of nations and empires—while the more local and personal events are regarded as mere accidents and chances that fall beyond the province of His control. When shall the Saviour's teaching be regarded as the true and only philosophy—that teaching which shows that great and little have no significance to God, are terms merely relative to man's weakness and finite grasp—that the fall of the sparrow and the numbering of the hairs of our head, the clothing of the grass of the field and the feeding of the fowls of the air, are essential parts of the same scheme which includes the weighing of mountains in scales and the holding of the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Our daily bread comes to us by the motion of the whole universe; the breeze that fans an infant's cheek is caused by the revolution of the globe; the

light of heaven that enables a child to read its lesson-book comes from a distance of millions of miles, and moves at the rate of hundreds of thousands of miles a minute. The mass of the earth is weighed and balanced in order that a lily may bend its head to effect the process of fertilization, and that the blood may flow through our veins, and our lungs play with the vital air. The mightiest and minutest things in God's providence are thus intimately associated and correlated. Throughout the life of Christ, He showed the same attention to the small and minute which we see in His works of nature and providence. Only a very brief portion of His life was spent in working mighty miracles ; by far the largest part of it was lived in obscurity, in the performance of humble duties, and the fulfilment of ordinary ends. On the cross dying for the sins of the whole world, finishing the work which His Father had given Him to do, in the sight of all heaven and earth and hell, He commended His mother, as any earthly son might have done, to the care of the disciple whom He loved. In the grave, when achieving the mightiest of all triumphs—leading captivity captive, and destroying him that had the power of death—He did not forget in the exultation of victory to fold carefully the linen clothes in which His dead body was wrapped—those green



withs that bound Him in His Samson-like sleep, and which He broke on the morning of His resurrection, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire.

And, as He acted in His own historical life, so He acts in the individual life of His people. There is nothing that can happen to them that is beneath His regard. He takes a particular interest in their personal history, and in every circumstance connected with it. His covenant not only includes the pardon of their sin and the sanctification of their nature, safety from the terrors of a violated law, rest from the accusations of a guilty conscience, it also makes ample provision for every evil that can possibly befall them. For the aching head, as well as for the accusing conscience; for the weary care-worn mind, as well as for the sin-laden soul, He provides a remedy and a relief. For the hidden want, He provides the hidden manna; for the trials that are unspeakable, he gives the strength of the joy that is unspeakable; for the crosses that cannot be displayed, and the groanings that cannot be uttered, He gives the peace which passeth all understanding; for the sorrow with which no stranger can intermeddle, He gives the sympathy and the help of the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. We do not know Him merely as the patient knows the physician, as the object

of charity knows the benefactor, as the pupil knows the teacher, by occasional and signal benefits; but we know Him as the child knows its mother, not only by the life which He has bestowed upon us, and by the tender natural tie which thus binds us to Him, but by the thousand offices of tenderness which He continually performs, by all those kind familiar acts often repeated, which, though little in themselves, imply for that very reason that the agent and the object must unite in close and personal contact, by all the weakness and dependence of the infancy of our spiritual being, hanging upon the bosom of a love that passeth knowledge. To Him who wrought the mighty miracle of our salvation we can go not only in the great trials and crosses of our life, under which we lie paralysed and benumbed, as under a stone that has crushed us; but also with those fretting cares and petty annoyances and numberless small disappointments and vexations which, like sand in the shoe, irritate and inflame the Christian's daily walk in the world, and wear out by their incessant friction the sparkle from the eye, and the glow from the cheek, and the elasticity from the heart. We can go to Him in prayer, pouring out our whole soul unreservedly, keeping back nothing; not merely asking Him in general terms for general spiritual blessings of which

at the moment we have no true apprehension, and for which we have no true longing, but asking Him specially for relief and rest from those little carking cares and troubles arising from the various relations of common life, of which our mind is full to the exclusion of more important things, and which sadly interfere with the spirit of devotion which we desire to cherish. The things that bow our head like a bulrush, but which we would not breathe to a fellow-creature for worlds, lest it should excite their ridicule or contempt, we can confide fully and freely to the ear of Him who never turned away from human need, however insignificant, even in His own hour of agony; and who not only raised the daughter of Jairus to life, but commanded meat to be given to her. Do not say that such common things are beneath His notice. Those who are wise in their own eyes may object that it is degrading to the dignity of religion; and the spiritual in their own esteem may say—It is not for a spiritual man to mention such things: he is or should be above them. But this is not Christ's view of the relation between His children and Himself. "Be careful for *nothing*," He says, "but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication, make your requests known unto God." "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in my name, *that* will I do." The common things of daily life are

the aliment on which devotion feeds : and the “circumstances with which we are surrounded are as fuel and oxygen, supporting the flame of ceaseless prayer which transmutes all substances to itself, and, like the fire upon the altar, presents the whole spirit and soul and body a living sacrifice unto God.”

The command of Jesus to give the restored child meat was intended, we may suppose, to serve several purposes ; to supply first a physical want, and in so doing to give clear unmistakable proof of the reality of the life restored to perfect health, and then to calm the apprehensions and the great astonishment of the parents, and to show that the course of nature, though violently interrupted for once, must be resumed according to the usual order. Jesus descended from the region of the supernatural to the region of ordinary life, from the working of a miracle to the satisfying of a commonplace want. And by that circumstance He teaches us the important lesson, that the spiritual life which He has imparted by Divine power must be sustained by human means. This is in entire harmony with all His historical dealings with man. The dispensation which was inaugurated by supernatural manifestations is carried on by common helps, and through the homely experiences of human life. The signs and wonders which opened a new era, or were needed to produce

faith in great emergencies, are not perpetuated in ordinary circumstances. The creation commenced with a stupendous miracle, but it is preserved by the quiet and uniform methods of nature. The law of Moses, which was given amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, is put in force throughout the continuous history of Israel by its own solemn sanctions. The Christianity, which first took its place in history by the aid of astonishing works appealing to the senses, now maintains its position by its own unobtrusive spiritual power among a society more deeply moved by spiritual things. The gifts of Divine inspiration, which were shown objectively to men in the tongues of flame and the mighty rushing winds of Pentecost, were discontinued when the formative work of the Holy Ghost in all places, and in all hearts, present in conscious manifestation to all discerning souls, was better known. What is necessary on the stage of initiation disappears from the stage of a fixed institution. The morning glow fades into the common light of day; the heavenly manna of the desert merges into the corn of the cultivated land. And so is it with our spiritual life individually. The transport of our conversion, when the glory of heaven came down to earth, is not indefinitely continued. Our new life is not maintained and increased by a repeti-

tion of the same process by which it was awakened. The extraordinary, appropriate to times of religious excitement, to revival or sacramental seasons, passes into the ordinary experience. Jesus commands us to give ourselves common meat. We are to strengthen and develop the spiritual life that has been produced in us by supernatural power, and quickened by the extraordinary influences of a special season of grace, by the common-place duties of the world, by the labours of our ordinary calling, by human nature's daily food, by the perhaps very unspiritual work that lies nearest to our hand. What is the birth of a remarkable occasion must become the habit of an ordinary life, if it is not to fall away and disappoint expectation.

“But he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.” How different was our Lord's manner towards different individuals! He said to the demoniac of Gadara a little while before, “Go home to thy friends, and show how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” And on the way to the house of Jairus He made the woman whom He cured confess her disease and relief before all the people; while here, on the contrary, He strictly forbids all mention of the wonderful deliverance. There was a reason for

this difference of treatment, founded not so much upon the circumstances which affected Himself, but upon the peculiarities and moral condition of the persons who got the benefit of His miracles. The True Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, gave differently coloured rays according to the nature of the medium through which it was transmitted. We have seen how the faith of the woman with the issue of blood was perfected by confession. And there can be no doubt that the command to the demoniac of Gadara to proclaim his cure, must have been in the highest degree beneficial to such a melancholy morbid man, shut up in himself, and shut out from the world, introducing him thus into the society of his fellow-creatures and restoring the healthy condition of his soul; while those who could not endure the direct teaching of Christ might be influenced by the story of one whose case was so notorious, and who was left behind in all the glow of his gratitude and devotion as Christ's minister and representative. It is not difficult on similar grounds to understand why our Lord should have enjoined silence upon Jairus and his wife. Of course the outward facts of the miracle could not be concealed; they were known to too many witnesses to render that possible. But it is evident that our Lord referred

not to the outward circumstances of the raising from the dead, but to its inward nature and spiritual design. The incident is very briefly described, but a thoughtful mind may receive from the description a pretty accurate impression of the character of the household. It is true that Jairus had faith, otherwise he would not have sought the help of Jesus, and the miracle would not have been performed ; but it was a faith that needed to be encouraged by sensible evidence, which required that Christ should go to the chamber of his daughter and lay his hands on her ere a cure could be effected, a faith which, when the assurance of her death came to him, Christ had to support by the comforting words, "Be not afraid, only believe." The presence of the hired mourners in the house indicated a love of display, a dependence upon the sympathy of others ; for although a national custom it was not always observed, and in cases of self-contained sorrow it was dispensed with as a mockery. While the command to give the restored daughter meat, showed that Christ regarded the parents as persons apt to be carried away by their feelings, to yield to the passing emotion, and thus forget duties of the most vital importance. From these little traits of character that occur in the course of the narrative, we learn enough of the disposition of Jairus and his



wife to satisfy us that the injunction to keep silent regarding the miracle was not unnecessary. They were people in a very prominent position, having many friends and acquaintances; and it is evident that they lived much in society and loved an outward bustling life. They were not meditative and thoughtful, but evidently outspoken, impulsive, and emotional. There was, therefore, great danger to their spiritual welfare, considering their circumstances and temperament from the miracle. Their public position exposed them to the visits of inquisitive friends, eager to hear all the particulars of so wonderful an event; their own disposition would lead them to speak of these particulars, to dwell upon each detail; how Jesus looked, and what He said and did, and how they themselves felt, and how their daughter came to herself and recognised them, and how joyful they were, and so on. And in thus going over again and again all the outward circumstances, the mere story of the miracle, to gratify the curiosity of every friend who called or whom they met, they ran a great risk of losing sight altogether of the deep meaning and personal application of the miracle, and the revelation which it gave of Him who performed it. Thus they would get indeed a temporal benefit, but they would miss the spiritual blessing which Christ designed for

them. They would have their daughter restored to them, but they would not have the saving knowledge of Him whom to know is eternal life, who is the resurrection and the life to all who believe. To save them from this loss, Jesus, knowing their weakness of character and the temptations to which their circumstances exposed them, graciously enjoined them to tell no man what was done. He wished them instead of dissipating the good effect of the miracle in mere talk about it, to retire into the silence of their own souls, and there ponder over the matter until they should learn its deep significance, and it should be the means of leading them to a truer knowledge of Him who, by raising the dead body of their daughter to life, gave them a sign of His power to raise their own souls dead in trespasses and sins to newness of life.

When the miracle of spiritual restoration takes place in a dead soul, the object of it is apt to be carried away by a flood of new emotions. The strange joy in his soul is stirring and manifestive. He long carried a wounded and bleeding conscience without any desire to lay open the distress to creature inspection. He sought to elude observation. But, now that his desire is accomplished, he can no longer conceal his emotion. He longs to speak of the marvellous deliver-

ance shown to him; he longs to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." Now, it is a question—To what extent and under what circumstances is the converted sinner to give way to this natural and proper feeling—the desire to publish the miracle of grace wrought upon him. Some would have no hesitation in saying that he should in all circumstances and to the fullest extent give way to it. They quote as an example to be always imitated the case of the Samaritan woman, who, when she discovered the Messiah for herself, immediately left her water-pot and ran and told her fellow-citizens of the discovery; and they speak of being "instant in season and out of season," misunderstanding the meaning and reference of these words. But, if any converted sinner, no matter what his temperament or circumstances may be, is to proclaim at once the wonderful things that have been done for him, where, we may well ask, is the practical reason and the special application for us in the difference of our Lord's instructions to different people? Surely, if He exercised a wise and righteous discrimination in cases that differed, should not we do the same. I believe that the injunction to publish immediately the miracle of grace is not binding upon every one who has experienced it; that there are indi-

viduals so situated and so constituted that their plain duty is to be silent in such a crisis; while I believe that there are other individuals so situated and so constituted whose plain duty and privilege it is to speak out. Take the case of a morbid, brooding, introspective man, who has undergone a saving change. The duty of such a man decidedly is to proclaim to others the great salvation that has come to himself. Jesus would have said to him, as he said to the melancholy demoniac who had dwelt among the tombs, "Go home to thy friends, and show what great things the Lord hath done for thee." Yielding to his natural disposition, he would conceal the change that had taken place upon him, and brood over it in silence, until, like the miser who feels it difficult to believe that his secretly hoarded money, the god of his idolatry, is safe, he finds it hard to realise that he has a saving interest in Christ at all. He becomes alive to every supposition of uncertainty; he is full of doubts and fears, and becomes dull and timid, the prey of changing frames and feelings that make his life miserable, aimless, and practically useless. To such a man anything that would help to take him out of himself would be an inestimable blessing. To ask him to conceal the miracle wrought upon him would be to foster and aggravate the morbid evil within.

But to enjoin him to go out among his fellow-creatures, to speak to them of the things which he had found so dear and useful to himself, to glory in his choice and own it, and urge others to become partakers of like precious faith, "Oh! taste and see that God is good," this would be health and vigour and happiness to him. His preaching to others would have a blessed reaction upon his own soul. It would banish all morbid doubts and fears; it would confirm and strengthen his faith, and make him what God designed every Christian to be—healthy, happy, and useful.

But, on the other hand, take the case of a man who is gossipy and loquacious, who has no depth of character, no concealment in his nature, but babbles over everything like a brook over its pebbles, what ought such a man to do when the Word of God has come to him in power? It is clear that to go and publish it to others would be a course fraught with danger to him. He would be inclined to make his conversion a matter of gossip. He would dwell upon its mere outward circumstances. The fact of having such an important event to tell to others would have a tendency to increase his own self-consequence; while the publicity and ostentation connected with it would tend to make him value more the outward aspect of his saving change to others than its inward relation to God and

his own soul. Many a young convert has been made vain and conceited and self-righteous through the premature publication to others of his restoration. Many who have flaunted their spiritual change ostentatiously before the eyes of their fellow-creatures have got irretrievable harm by so doing. They made their religious life a mere outward one—a thing of display, feeling, and excitement. They were tempted to exaggerate their emotions, to run ahead both of their knowledge of the Gospel and their experience of its power, to use words that had no meaning, and to express fervours that had nothing corresponding to them in their own hearts. They became insincere and self-sufficient; their religious life became an unreal, conventional, theoretical thing. And the natural consequence of such conduct speedily followed: they backslided, and in their fall not only seriously injured themselves, but also dragged down with them the cause which they so unworthily represented. It would have been far better for such individuals if they had acted upon the injunction of Christ to Jairus, “See thou tell no man;” if they had hid these things in their heart, meditated upon them in solitude and silence, until their religious character had been sufficiently established, their faith in Christ and love to Him sufficiently strengthened, and their knowledge of

His truth sufficiently deep and extensive to qualify them to speak to others of the great things that Christ had done for their souls. There would be no loss, but, on the contrary, great gain to the cause of Christ, if, in the great majority of cases, those who espoused that cause thought more and spoke less, gave themselves more to meditation, self-examination, and prayer, than to exhorting others on the strength of a very brief and imperfect experience.

The Saviour's injunction to Jairus is capable of very wide application. How many people lose the spiritual benefits of affliction through gossiping about its accidents. They are fond of having numerous friends about them to whom they can speak of the trouble. They wish them to come and sympathise or condole with them. They say, "Behold and see all ye that pass by, is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow." They tell to every new person with whom they come into contact how the trouble happened and how they feel under it. Instead of saying to God, in the stillness that follows the recognition of His hand in it, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," "What dost Thou require me to be, to do, or to suffer for Thy name's sake?" they speak about the pains and inconveniences of it to those who will listen to them. Instead of retiring to solitude and silence, and meditating

upon the trial in their own hearts, upon God's design in it and their own duty under it, they seek the society of their friends to talk about its mere natural circumstances. No wonder that affliction in such a case should leave such persons no better than it found them; that sickness should bring no saving health with it; disappointment no hope that maketh not ashamed; adversity no lesson of faith or blessing of heaven; and bereavement no acquaintance with the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and who will never change or die. No wonder that so few of the great family of the sorrowful should be really *acquainted* with grief. They know the outward aspect of it, its dress, its appearance, even its face and manner. But of its inner nature, of the deep things which it reveals, the love that is hidden in it, the blessing which it disguises, the joy that is at the core of it, they know nothing. To learn lessons from affliction that will make our whole future life wiser and stronger, we must obey Christ's injunction, "Tell no man about it," and ponder it in our hearts—make it the subject of secret prayer and meditation. We are not forbidden to seek the sympathy of our friends in our troubles, or to pour out our hearts to them; for sympathy is sweet, and has a wonderfully soothing power. But what we are forbidden to do is to gossip



about our trouble, to make it, not the means of humbling us before God, but of exalting us in the estimation of our fellow-creatures, raising us into objects of interest and pity, and thus increasing our self-consequence. For so strangely constituted is the human heart that it will rather glory in its very sorrow than not glory at all ; it will seek food for its vanity and self-importance in what excites the pity of others. We are to hide our sorrow in our heart, until it has accomplished in us the good pleasure of God's goodness, and the work of faith with power.

How often is the effect of a solemn sermon neutralised by mere talk about it. This is one of the commonest ways of dissipating salutary impression. The truth as it is in Jesus has been faithfully proclaimed ; the Spirit has been striving to carry it home to the heart and conscience ; but the whole benefit is lost by the gossip at the church door or on the way home. People speak not about the truth proclaimed, but about the method of proclaiming it, the style of composition, the manner of the preacher ; and in thus dwelling upon the mere external circumstances of the "word in season," they lose sight of its solemn spiritual significance and personal application to themselves. This is the principal reason why the seed sown does not prosper ; why, in spite of all the lessons

that are given to us, we do not learn. We have been taught much, and taught by God Himself, and yet we have learned little or nothing, because we have talked all our teaching away. The great want of the present day is quietness and spiritual meditation. There is too much talk and too little thought. And this is the secret of the shallowness of our spiritual life, the little knowledge we have of the truth, and the little influence which it exerts upon us. This is the reason why religion through the life of its professors is so inoperative in the world. It has not sufficiently penetrated into our own being, and become a part of ourselves, through meditation and prayer, to produce an impression through us upon others. Mere talk about good things will have no influence without the life which they produce speaking through the words. Let those of us, then, who are apt to gossip away serious impressions, to evaporate in breath the good out of every sermon and providential dispensation, commune with our own hearts and be still. Let us tell no man about God's dealings with us, till we have thought about them and got the full good out of them ourselves. If God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, let us seek by meditation upon our own character, and upon the person and work of Christ—by reading, reflection, and prayer—to be rooted and

grounded in the Divine love, to make our calling and election sure. If we are afflicted, let us, instead of speaking to others about the outward circumstances of our trial, dwell much in thought about its real nature and design, and seek to have it sanctified to us. If we have been hearing a true and faithful sermon, let us, instead of talking about its mere style and manner, ponder its precious truths in our hearts, and seek to be led by them nearer to Him who is the Truth and the Life. Let our meditations always run in the channel of our condition. Thus shall we have root in ourselves. Thus shall we prepare ourselves for receiving and understanding the messages of God that come to us day by day, and reduce to practice those good and lofty thoughts, those visions of purity and holiness, those ideals of love and unselfishness, which the Spirit of God inspires in us. Thus shall we work out our own salvation, for it is God that worketh in us. In an honest and good heart having heard the Word, we shall keep it and bring forth fruit with patience. Our profiting will appear unto all; and, in the end, we who kept wise silence and refrained our speech, shall be able from a richer experience and a fuller knowledge, and with greater power and confidence, to recommend the salvation of Jesus to others, and to say with the Apostle, "That which we have heard, which we have

seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

CHAPTER II.

*THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON.*

ST. LUKE vii. 11-17.

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain : and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow : and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier : and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, That God hath visited his people.

## CHAPTER II.

*THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON.*

SOME places have been made famous by a single incident. Bethany is the town of Lazarus; and Nain is the village of the widow's son whom Jesus raised from the dead. By no other event is Nain known. For a moment the light of heaven fell upon it, and haloed it with a glory which has attracted the eyes of all the Christian ages, and then it disappeared into its former obscurity. The site of the ancient village is well authenticated; it is occupied by the modern Nein, a squalid miserable collection of huts situated on the north-western edge of Jebel el Duhy, or the "Little Hermon," where the hill slopes down into the plain of Esdraelon. No grander view can be found anywhere in Palestine than that which stretches around this village from its green nest on the mountain side; amply justifying its descriptive name, which is sup-

posed to be derived from a Hebrew word signifying beauty or pleasantness. Within the circle of the surrounding hills some of the most stirring events in Old Testament history have occurred. A thousand battles have swept across the wide fertile plain below, which, like the plain of Stirling, situated in like manner at the point of transition between the Highlands and Lowlands, has been chosen as a fitting scene for strife. To the right extends the range of Carmel, on which Elijah discomfited the priests of Baal; to the left rises up in isolated beauty Mount Tabor, at the base of which Barak overcame the hosts of Sisera; while in front appear the mountains of Gilboa, on which the despairing warrior-king of Israel, amid his vanquished army and slaughtered sons, closed his tragic career. But that noble amphitheatre is not associated exclusively with scenes of death and destruction, in which the passions of man furnished a premature prey to the destroyer; it is also connected with scenes of blessing and restoration more suited to its pastoral beauty and mountain peace. Nor far off is the little village of Shunem, in which Elisha performed, amid the most touching circumstances, the wonderful miracle of raising from the dead the child of his generous hostess. And from the highest point to the west, which frowns over the sea, the first cloud that for three long



years had passed across the burning blue of the sky was seen to arise at Elijah's prayer out of the far horizon, no bigger than a man's hand at first, but growing larger and blacker, until the whole heavens were overcast, and the famine-stricken land was once more musical with the sound of falling waters and green with living verdure. In harmony with those gentler memories, but in striking contrast to all the other associations of the region, is the one only incident that connects Jesus with the plain of Esdraelon.

Lying upon the southern border of Galilee, and on the direct road to Jerusalem, our Lord came to Nain on His way south to keep the Passover in the temple. The day before He had healed the centurion's servant at Capernaum; and now, after having walked eighteen miles since the cool hours of early morning, He toiled slowly in the afternoon up the steep slope leading to the village. He was doubtless tired and footsore with his long and weary journey, and needed rest and refreshment. But there was still work for the Father awaiting Him, in the doing of which He would find His meat and drink, and have His strength renewed. A crowd attracted by His wonderful sayings and the fame of His miracles followed Him up the rugged ascent. That rough broken path is the same to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago, and is one of the

few certain sites of events in the life of Christ; so few, in the wise providence of God, we may well believe, because of the proneness of man to cleave to some visible object of worship, and to pay that adoration to the thing which is due only to Him by whom all things were created. As He drew near the village, whose walls and buildings loomed in a hollow of the heights above Him, the dust of travel whitening His sandals, a long procession of mourners issued out of the gate. They were carrying a dead man to his burial on the east side of the village, where the rough rock was full of sepulchral caves, which still exist. It is probable that the young man had died that very morning; for burial in an eastern clime followed hard upon the heels of death, and with the Jews took place usually before the first night-fall. However precious the form, it must speedily be veiled from view, for love cannot endure the changes which death has wrought in it. When the sun was setting, therefore, the young man was borne out from his mother's home to the long last home that awaits us all. There was much in the circumstances of the sad procession which appealed to the sympathetic feelings of man. Indeed it would be difficult to make the picture of desolation more complete than the Evangelist has done it by a few simple

words: "There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The desire of her eyes had gone before, and left her to maintain the struggle of life single-handed—in grief, perhaps in poverty. And now her only child had been taken away from her, upon whom she leant for support, who was her sole stay and solace. And her home was left unto her desolate, lonely and empty as last year's withered nest in the hedge.

To a Jewish mother there was an added bitterness in such a bereavement; for not only was the loss of offspring commonly regarded as a direct punishment for sin among a people who acted the part of Job's comforters and looked upon every trial as a judgment, but to die childless was a terrible calamity, because the parents were thereby excluded from the hope of a share in the ancestry of the expected Messiah, which every family in Israel cherished. The national feeling on the subject of offspring was very strong. From the time of the promise given to Abraham that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, the desire of having children became a strong and leading passion in the Jewish mind. The Jewish child was expected to be not only the possessor of his father's earthly wealth and honours, but also the heir of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that

fadeth not away. The anticipation of the glorious times which the harp of prophecy has celebrated in such tones of anticipative rapture, called forth the fervent prayer of many in Israel that they might not be cut off from the possibility of sharing by their representatives, if not in the birth of the "Promised Seed," at least in the glories and felicities of His kingdom. To answer this prayer there are numerous instances in Scripture in which God has specially interfered; and the anguish and reproach of barrenness were no more remembered for joy that a man was born into the world. Ignorant of God's appointed time and way, the widow of Nain had perhaps cherished the fond hope that she might be the chosen channel through whom the Desire of all nations should enter into the world. But now her only son had died childless, and there was none to inherit her name, and no possibility of sharing in the glorious national hope. This gave, we may well believe, a deeper pathos to the mother's natural anguish of bereavement; and, doubtless, sympathy with it attracted the large concourse of villagers which accompanied the bier to the tomb, and drew from that emotional race a wail of lamentation wider and truer than was usually made for the dead.

It is interesting here to notice that the three recorded miracles of restoration from the dead, and the only ones as we believe, were performed upon young persons. The daughter of Jairus was only twelve years of age; the young man of Nain was probably not many years older; and all that is recorded of Lazarus leaves the impression upon our minds that he was in the very prime of life. There is a fitness in this circumstance which commends itself to us, and renders it antecedently probable that, as Jesus was so sparing and reserved in these most striking of all the manifestations of His power, He should exercise it only in such cases. To the aged, whose years were but labour and sorrow, and who had lived to say of things they once enjoyed, "there is no pleasure in them," restoration of life after death would have been no boon. And therefore Jesus did not renew any life that had found, or nearly so, its end at the limit set to man; never awoke the aged from the last sleep to live over again the trials and privations from which they had escaped. Such miracles would have seemed to us monstrous and unnatural; and the apocryphal Gospels, which narrate a great many of them, indicate by so doing their false character. But there is a natural harmony in Jesus raising from the dead those to whom life was really valuable, who could

both enjoy it and turn it to profitable uses. That the young should be taken away in the midst of their days, in the bloom and beauty of life, when they could in no sense be said to have fulfilled their course, is a calamity and a waste which we should expect Christ would be willing to repair.

And here a cognate thought occurs to the mind, that probably one of the reasons of the death of the young, for whom there is no resuscitation in this world, and which seems to us so mysterious, is in order to produce that variety of society in the future world which adds so much to the happiness and usefulness of this. We have reason to believe that not only will the diversities of character and experience which distinguish different individuals here be carried in a transmuted form beyond the grave, but also the bodily and other differences which arise from the different periods of life at which they were called into eternity. The child, the youth, the middle-aged, the old, will mingle with one another as they mingle here, and enliven their intercourse with one another by the special excellencies which are appropriate to each age. We cannot imagine that heaven will lack the variety which is the great characteristic of all God's works on this earth and in the stellar worlds, and which is so cheering and necessary in the world of

mankind ; that all its inhabitants will be of one fixed monotonous age. They shall all indeed be gifted with eternal youth, but that universal youth will not be incompatible with the preservation of those differences of years, upon which He who knew when it was best to remove them, had at death set His seal and stamp for immortality. They shall never grow old ; the glory of heaven shall never bring wrinkles nor grey hair ; and the flight of millenniums will leave them unchanged. But those ages of life at which their growth here was stopped, and which in the very oldest are but as a moment compared to eternity, will retain for ever, amid all the transfiguration of the glorified state, much of the qualities which distinguish them here—the innocence of the young, the dignity and maturity of those of riper years, and the calm serenity and wisdom of the old.

We are apt to look upon the fact of Jesus meeting the funeral procession at the precise moment when it was issuing out of the gate of the city, as a mere chance or fortunate coincidence. But nothing really occurs by chance ; there is no such divinity in the universe. It is only the blind inconsiderateness of men that has made Fortune a goddess, and enthroned her in the heavens. We see not the links connecting events, but their sequences are not therefore arbitrary.

What seems accidental or contingent to us, who are not acquainted with the plan to be executed and developed, is a Divine pre-arrangement; and the very aspect of chance or confusion which it presents, ought only to elevate our conception of Him who sees the end from the beginning, who worketh all things by the counsel of His will, and who evolves from the whole His great designs. Jesus must needs pass through Samaria, not only because this was the most direct route to Jerusalem, to which He was going to keep the Passover, but in order that He might meet and converse at Jacob's Well with the woman of Samaria, and produce in her heart, by His wise and gracious dealing, that faith to which He could unfold the glorious revelation of His Messiahship. And now He must needs enter the village of Nain, in order to pour the balm of consolation into a heart that is experiencing the bitterness of the mourning for an only son. He who brings the insect to fertilize the flower, and the cloud to refresh the parched soil, brought on this occasion the sufferer and the Comforter together, in the seemingly accidental, but in reality deep-laid scheme of His wisdom and love.

“And when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her.” It is not said that the bereaved mother addressed Jesus. She probably knew not who He



was, and was occupied solely with her sorrow, heeding no one, seeing nothing in all the horizon but that one mournful object, her son's bier, beside which she walked, with downcast head and faltering steps, weeping her very soul out in tears, and refusing to be comforted. She had fallen into an icy crevasse of despair, where no human aid could reach her. She knew not that the promised Messiah, the Resurrection and the Life, was standing beside her. But Jesus knew all the circumstances of her case, and needed no outward sign or inflection of the voice to convince Him of her anguish. Never was there a human heart so feeling as His. It thrilled with most delicate sensitiveness to every sight and sound of woe. The very word employed in our version to express His sympathy denotes this exquisite tenderness and sensibility. In the original it means far more than mere ordinary compassion for the miserable. It is derived from a term signifying the womb—the organ of maternity—and signifies the unutterable pity which a mother has for her offspring. It is the strongest and most immediate instinct of our nature. He who made the mother's heart has a mother's heart in His own bosom; and with a yearning maternal love He has compassion upon the poor bereaved mother. With the counter-part of the feeling she experienced towards

her dead child, He pitied her own distress. The kind of compassion which Jesus bore to the widow of Nain is a beautiful example of Christ's wonderful adaptation of Himself to our wants and woes. His revelation of Himself, and His sympathy and help, are in exactest accordance with our condition. As the impression in wax answers to the seal, so is there the most complete harmony between His succour and our necessity. And what He was to this woman in her hour and power of darkness, He is to us in similar circumstances. Every sorrow we endure is well known to Him who carried our sorrows and bare our sicknesses. In every crisis of woe the pitying eye of Jesus is upon us in our deepest secrecy, and when we imagine that we are alone, and that no one cares for us or knows our grief, His tender heart beats with special compassion for us. No failure of words or lack of utterance can hide the inmost movements of our hearts from Him. He is the present witness and infallible interpreter of all our experience; and it is perhaps in order that God Himself may read the secrets of those sorrows with which no stranger can intermeddle—may explore the depths of our hearts, which we can make bare to no human eye—that we are capable of feelings we cannot utter, that there is no language for the deeper wants of the soul. What we

endeavour to shape to human apprehension in broken accents, with faltering speech and stammering tongue, which give forth but half the sense, He requires no channels of conveyance intimately and unerringly to know. What it would be but lost labour to express to men, even could we find the means of expressing it, Jesus knows from the corresponding emotion in His own heart; and He has the truest and tenderest compassion upon us.

“There is no need of words of mine to tell  
My heart to Thee; Thou needest not to spell,  
As others must, my hidden thoughts and fears,  
From out my broken words, my sobs, or tears;  
Thou knowest all, knowest far more than I,  
The inner meaning of each tear or sigh.

Thou mayest smile, perchance, as mothers smile  
On sobbing children, seeing all the while  
How soon will pass away the endless grief,  
How soon will come the gladness and relief;  
But if Thou smilest, yet Thy sympathy  
Measures my grief by what it is to me.”

Jesus Himself was, strictly speaking, the only son of His mother; and, as Joseph was in all probability dead by this time, she too was a widow, worn down by the duties and cares of a humble home. The ties that bound Him to her were of the deepest and tenderest kind, as much above those which unite an ordinary mother and son as His nature was sinless

and perfect. He ever treated her with the utmost reverence and love. Amid His own engrossing work, we may be sure that He had never forgotten her who had nursed Him on her bosom, and with whom He had shared the labours and joys of His thirty years of obscurity in the cottage at Nazareth. From His own filial feelings, therefore, He could picture those of the widow of Nain before Him. And it is lawful to suppose that His compassion for her touched Him more nearly from His knowledge of a somewhat similar, but even more trying, experience that awaited Himself. It is not improbable that He saw before His prescient eye at that moment the most touching of all the incidents of the Cross, when, amid His own extreme agonies, He looked down with compassion upon His mother Mary, as with the sword piercing through and through her heart she stood near with the disciple whom He loved, and He said to them both in fewest words of uttermost tenderness, "Woman, behold thy son ; Son, behold thy mother." If this be so, we cannot wonder that the woman who came before Him in agonising circumstances similar to those in which He would soon have to leave His own mother, drew from His heart a peculiar compassion, such as He felt not for any other human being—for all the suffering and the wretched to whom He so tenderly

ministered—and induced Him, unsolicited, to perform for her one of His rarest and supremest acts of mercy.

“And said unto her, Weep not.” This “weep not” is widely different from that addressed to the hired mourners of Jairus’ household. There it was uttered in indignation, for the purpose of restoring quiet; here it is said in deepest sympathy, for the purpose of cheering and soothing. How often do these words proceed from the lips of earthly comforters! Such a phrase is one of the common-places of consolation, and it is as meaningless as it is vain. It is uttered simply for lack of something better to say, and in order to show our sympathy. It gives no reason why the mourner should cease from weeping. What can we do in the presence of a sorrow that overwhelms the soul in the midst of the ruins of its happiness. Miserable comforters are we, however tender and pitiful. We may say, “Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears,” but altogether unavailingly. The sorrow flows on unheedingly; and we might as well say to the streamlet that ripples night and day over its pebbles, “Cease thy flowing,” as to the heart that has a bitter fountain of tears welling up in it, “Weep not.” We may, indeed, seek to impress upon the mourner the conviction that, though much is gone,

all is not gone ; that there are still blessings left to enrich and endear life. We may direct attention to the precious promises of God's Word, that shine like bright stars in the darkest sky, and fall like soft dew upon the withered heart in the loneliest night. We may point to the undimmed blue of God's unchanging love, which gleams calmly and serenely behind the passing cloud of our sorrow, and into which our sorrow, when it has served its purpose, is destined to melt, and on which every cloud that veileth love itself is love ; and we may speak of that glorious fold where our beloved ones are safely gathered, to whose green pastures and fountains of living waters the Good Shepherd is leading them, and into which no wolf of death or woe can ever break. But still, in spite of all we can say or do, the tears will fall, and the bosom will heave with its load of sorrow. We cannot administer the relief that is needed. We cannot reach directly the seat of the trouble with our medicines. It is only Jesus that can say effectively, "Weep not." For His words are but the signs of His power. They are spirit and they are life, and therefore reach directly the springs of our life, and minister directly to the wants and woes of the spirit. He who spake all the glory of the world into existence when He said to the primeval darkness and disorder, "Let there be light," speaks

peace and comfort to the distressed heart in the midst of its wild regret and overwhelming yearnings. The intolerable sense of want, the dread vacuity of the heart, the dreariness and loneliness of life, the perpetual craving for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still," He removes by a sweet sense of possession, He fills with a calm satisfying feeling of love, He soothes into rest with an indescribable but most real and blessed experience of a peace which the world cannot give.

Some look upon this "Weep not" as an argument for stoicism under sorrow. They would have us subdue our grief and repress our tears, as symptoms of rebellion against the Divine will. They would make us ashamed of them as signs of weakness, unworthy of the dignity of human nature. Such Christians have not learned their Christianity at Gethsemane or at Golgotha. They know little of human nature, and still less of the blessed religion they profess. An indifference that hardens itself into the passivity and unfeelingness of a statue, is not the noblest attribute of Christian manhood. Dry eyes under grievous trial are not the test of true heroism or submission to the Divine will. They may be the sign of an obstinacy that refuses to suffer, that will not put its neck under the yoke at all—of a proud determination of the will

to be sufficient for itself against all the evils of this life. No one need be ashamed of tears, since our Saviour's eyes were filled with them, since we read that the noblest characters in sacred and secular history shed them. There are, indeed, weak natures that have recourse to crying with little cause. But the power to weep in the great crises and tragic experiences of life is a sign, not of weakness, but of strength. It may be combined with the grandest qualities. That there is no sin in weeping is sufficiently proved by the fact that God's chastisements are founded upon the sensibility of our nature to pain and sorrow. Without this sensibility, the discipline could not effect any of the moral purposes for which it was designed. We cannot be said to give up what we do not prize, or to bear what we do not feel. The shedding of tears, therefore, is not a sign of rebellion against the will of God; but, on the contrary, a yielding to that natural susceptibility to sorrow which God has given to us for wise and gracious purposes. It is acting in obedience to the instincts of that nature which God has made; for it does not depend upon us to be unaffected by sorrow—we are made for that very purpose.

The very existence of tears shows that God has designed them and has a use for them. It is true that



immoderate grief that is full of repining and discontent, that upbraids God for the one trial under which it is suffering, and forgets His uniform and long-continued goodness, that is so swallowed up with its own selfish loss as to forget all other claims and duties, that has no sense of heaven—is sinful, is rebellious. Such tears ought to be repressed. They are those of a slave that scorch and harden, and not those of a child that soothe and purify. But, when we surrender our low self-will, and the full pride of our sin—when, in the midst of our sorest trouble, we have a *wish* to be resigned to the will of heaven—there is no sin, no rebelliousness in allowing nature to take her course, and throw off the load which presses upon the heart. Our Saviour bids us weep in such circumstances, for tears will do us good. He permits us to tremble and shrink under our sorrow, for trembling and shrinking at such a time are natural, and He wishes us to be true to our human nature. He does not wish to make us Stoics, but tender-hearted Christians made perfect through suffering. And, therefore, when He says, “Weep not,” He does not mean to forbid tears, or to make us ashamed of them; but He means to give us a reason, a sufficient cause, for drying our tears. He does not say, “be comforted,” merely; He gives the means of comfort. He acts upon the only true principle by which

sorrow can be assuaged, viz., by removing the painful feeling produced by the loss of an inferior good, and substituting the joyful feeling produced by the possession of a superior good. He gives us blessings far more precious and enduring than those whose loss we mourn—joys that leave no stains or stings behind, in exchange for those that have broken when we reposed upon them, and pierced us through with many painful darts. In the darkness caused by the breaking and the extinguishing of the earthly lamp, He makes the Sun of Righteousness to arise upon us with healing in His wings. In the thirst of the soul produced by the drying up of the earthly fountain, He leads us to fountains of living water, and wipes away all tears from our eyes.

“ Weep not for death !  
’Tis but a fever stilled,  
A pain suppressed, a fear at rest,  
A solemn hope fulfilled.  
The moonshine on the slumbering deep  
Is scarcely calmer—wherefore weep ?

Weep not for death !  
The fount of tears is sealed,  
Who knows how bright the inward light  
To those shut eyes revealed ?  
Who knows what peerless love may fill  
The heart that seems so cold and still ? ”

The words “ Weep not ” must have sounded very

strange to the ears of the sorrowing mother. If any hope of God's interference had at one time cheered her while she watched her dying child, all such hope must now have fled. Never more for her can the happy past return, or the future smile. And yet there is an indescribable something in the look and tone of Jesus that arrests her attention, and awakens a vague hope from the bottom of her hopelessness, as a stray sunbeam in the dark days of January calls a snowdrop from its desolate frost-bound bed. She knew not what He was about to do ; but she awaited the result with blanched lips and throbbing breast. It is an entirely consistent circumstance that throughout the whole course of the gospel history, amid the numberless requests made to Jesus, involving miraculous interpositions, there is not a single example of a request to restore life to a dead person. Neither Jairus nor Lazarus' sisters made such a request. They besought him to cure the sufferer, and to keep back the expiring life ; but they were silent when the life had fled. They felt as every human being feels, that as it is appointed unto man once to die, so death is the end of every effort as it is of every hope. When death has happened, the friend of highest faith as well as the friend of lowest has to acquiesce in the inevitable ; all prayers and wishes and labours are

given up, and nothing is left but to mourn our irremediable loss.

“He came and touched the bier.” It was not necessary for Him to do this, so far as the exercise of His Divine power was concerned. He could have stood where He was and commanded death to release his prey as easily as He healed the nobleman’s son, and the centurion’s servant, and the Syro-Phenician woman’s daughter at a distance. But Jesus acted here as He acted in the case of the daughter of Jairus, in the case of the leper, and in the case of Simon’s wife’s mother. And there was a deep significance in what He did. That step which He took from the spot on which He stood to the bier, was an emblem of the longer step which He took from the bosom of the living Father in heaven to this fallen and dead world. He came to the bier instead of raising the young man to life where He was, just as He came to our world instead of redeeming it in heaven. Jesus *came* to seek and to save that which was lost. He goes to meet every case of distress, instead of commanding it to be brought before Him; and in the wondrous depth of His meekness and condescension puts Himself on the level of the trouble, and in that lowly attitude works its cure. *He touched the bier.* Jesus by, so doing violated the letter of the law that

He might keep its spirit, which is that mercy is better than sacrifice. Such contact with death, as was pointed out in the case of Jairus' daughter, was forbidden by the Levitical law, under the penalty of uncleanness and isolation for a time. This penalty Jesus incurred. He became ceremonially dead while touching the dead body. He took to Himself the infirmities which He removed from others; He bore in His own person the sicknesses which He healed. He wrought His wonderful works not only by the expression of an Almighty will, but also by the power of a redemptive sympathy. He now touched the bier of another, but He was soon to lie on the bier Himself. He now became unclean through mere contact with the dead body of another, but He was soon to become unclean through a subjection in His own person to a death numbered among transgressors, the shameful death of the cross. And therefore the touching of the bier of the widow of Nain's son was a part of the great sacrifice of Calvary, a sign and an anticipation of it. It indicated in its own degree and place the great truth of His suretyship and substitution. He entered by His incarnation into the fellowship of the penalty which man's sin had entailed. It was as a result of the law of human community of interests that the Holy One, who was Himself undefiled

by sin, was yet subjected to the burden of the curse and of death, resulting from the sins of those of whose nature He had become partaker. And therefore He touched the bier, to show that He raised the young man to life not by His absolute power as God, but by the power of His own suffering and death as a sacrifice for sin. We must remember always the precious doctrine, that it was in the lowly and suffering form that Christ encountered the enemies of His people, the world, sin, death, and hell, and vanquished them all. In death He conquered; by death He abolished death; by His suffering He atoned for sin, expiated our guilt, appeased the wrath of a holy God; and out of weakness, suffering, death, and the grave He came forth dragging captivity captive. And it is still as the Crucified One that He prevails. It is the power of Jesus' love in self-sacrifice that melts men's hearts, subdues their will, changes their nature, and creates anew their life. This is the advocacy that prevails with God in behalf of His people, that procures for them all needed grace and strength, and that keeps them safe unto the day of redemption. The Crucified One is destined ultimately to prevail over every form of evil, to put down all hostile rule, and to subdue all things unto Himself. At the name of the Crucified One every knee must yet bow, His

enemies in terror, His redeemed in adoration. Jesus therefore touched the bier of the dead man at Nain in token of His fellowship with him in death, and that it was by the power of His own death that He raised him to life. The incident also teaches us how death is overcome, not by any magical or arbitrary exercise of will, but by inward union with Him who not only has life but is life. The hand stretched out to touch or raise was but the apt symbol of a deeper union in that vital energy by which all cures are wrought.

“And they that bare him stood still.” They were struck by a sudden consciousness that they were in the presence of One who had a right to stop them, even in their progress to the tomb; and they waited silently and reverently for what He might say or do. Stranger though He was probably to all of them, they did not venture to ask Him why He placed Himself between them and the fulfilment of their sad errand; they did not push on regardless of His interference. They did not, like the hired mourners in the house of Jairus, laugh Jesus to scorn. They felt the awe of heaven upon their spirits; and the sense of a higher world overcame their human impatience and pride, and compelled them unbidden to stand still in expectant attitude. And for this reverential obedience

and waiting they were richly rewarded. They had the unspeakable privilege of witnessing a mighty act, which would in future change for them the shadow of death into the morning. And a similar reward is conferred upon all reverential spirits who recognise the Divine presence in every work of nature and in every event of human life, and who stand still in humble trust and hushed patience to see the salvation of God. It is the reverential spirit that sees, with down-drooping eyes, wonderful things out of the Divine law in nature and grace—that beholds, with shoes put off its feet, the Angel of the Covenant in every bush that burns with the flame of life—that enters with the blood of atonement into the Holy of Holies of Divine communion—that looks, in the spirit on the Lord's Day, through the open door of heaven upon the glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. There is too little of this feeling of reverence in our daily business and in our religious worship; and in the hurry and preoccupation and familiarity of life, we lose many a bright glimpse of the spiritual, and many a rich experience of the Divine.

What a scene for the genius of a great painter does the imagination picture at this sublime expectant moment, when the power of God is about to be visibly



displayed; the mother bowed down with grief, and yet lifting up to the face of Jesus eager eyes in which a new-born hope struggles with the tears of despair; the bearers of the bier standing still with looks of awe and astonishment; the motley groups of the funeral procession, and the multitude who followed Jesus, in their picturesque oriental dresses, turning to one another as if asking the meaning of this strange proceeding; the calm holy form of Jesus touching the bier; and the last red level rays of the sun setting behind the green hills on the western horizon, haloing with a sacred glow the head of the Redeemer and the shrouded figure that lies motionless and unconscious on the bier, speaking touchingly of that sun that shall no more go down!

The stillness is broken by words such as human ears had never heard before—"Young man, I say unto thee arise." Once before, within the circuit of these Galilean hills, the spell of death was broken. In yonder village of Shunem Elisha raised the Shunamite's child. But how laborious and painful was the process! How reluctant was the tyrant to let go his hold of his victim! How the door of the tomb creaked and groaned as the prophet, endowed for the occasion with more than Samson's strength, turned it upon its hinges with the sorrow of his soul and the

sweat of his brow. He laid himself upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands. He prayed earnestly and with all the passion of his soul three times. He rose and walked to and fro in the room to recover by exercise the heat which had passed by absorption from himself to the cold dead corpse upon which he lay. We see the birth-pangs, as it were, of the resurrection life, and this was because Elisha was but a servant in the house, and possessed but a limited measure of the Spirit. But here in Nain is the Master of the house, the Lord of the living and the dead, who possesses the Spirit without measure, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and He raises the young man to life with a word, with as much ease as He performed the commonest transactions of life. He commanded the young man to arise from the bier, as He ordered the young maiden to arise from her bed. "I say unto thee." How suggestive of omnipotence is that *I*. In His own name He speaks. He has recourse to no extraneous help. He relies on His own strength, and He works by a power immanent and inherent in Himself.

In the original our Lord is represented as using several words to convey His command. As Greek,

however, was not, as we have every reason to believe, the language which our Saviour spoke, but Aramaic, it is reasonable to suppose that He used on this occasion the same word for "arise" which is given in Aramaic by St. Mark in connection with the restoration of the daughter of Jairus. One word, "*cumi*," in such a case would express His calm authoritative utterance. In the narrative of the stilling of the tempest, each of His commands is conveyed by a single verb in the imperative mood; to the winds He said, "*siōpa*," *peace*, and to the waves, "*pephimoso*," *be still*. In the healing of the man who was deaf and dumb, St. Mark gives the one Aramaic word which Christ used, "*Ephphatha*," *be opened*; and these cases, I think, warrant the inference that, on every occasion of His miraculous interference, He employed only a single word. And in this respect the miracles of the new creation would be in keeping with the great miracle of the first creation. God used, not several words as in our translation, "*Let there be light*," but one majestic word, "*Tehioth*." There is no periphrasis about His style. He whose commandment as the Lord of nature runs very swiftly throughout the outward world of inanimate things, utters His voice in removing the disabilities of the human world with the ease and simplicity of One who knows that He has

only to speak and it will be done, to command and it will stand fast. On the present occasion He did not mutter His charms like an enchanter, but, attesting the dignity of the moment, He spoke in the hearing of the people, and in language which they could most thoroughly understand. And as His sublime word, *arise*, thrilled through the heart of the mourning mother, and caused an answering thrill in the hearts of the silent multitude, so it awoke an echo in the mysterious darkness and loneliness of the silent land. A mother's tears could not recall the lost one. The agony of a widowed mother's broken heart bleeding for its only earthly hope and joy, could not open those sealed eyes and frozen lips. Deaf was the cold ear to all cries and prayers. Love is powerful—the most powerful thing on earth—but death is more powerful even than a mother's love; and, when it has obtained possession, it refuses to give up its prey to the most passionate human entreaty. But there is a Love that is more than love, that has destroyed death and led captivity captive; and the still small voice of that Love which comforts as one whom a mother comforteth, and has all power on earth and in heaven, reached the spirit and called it back—made the young man sit up on his bier, as of old it made Elijah stand in the mouth of his cave at

Horeb, and wrap his face in his mantle, although the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire had produced no impression upon him. The young man awoke as if he had been waiting for the summons, not living only, but well, bearing no marks of the sickness or disease that had brought him to the grave. When all hope was over for ever, the highest expectation of hope was fulfilled. The young man was being carried to the tomb, and not to a Saviour ; but, on that dread unreturning path, Life came to meet him, and to turn him back to the land of the living ; and into the desolate loneliness of the sorest human bereavement came the radiance of a great joy, drying all a mother's tears, as came the fire from heaven on the cold and drenched sacrifice of Elijah on Carmel.

“ And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.” What did he speak about? Did he communicate to the bystanders any of the secrets which death so jealously keeps under his impassive calmness? Did he make known into what wonderful regions of light, shrouded to us in such awful and inscrutable mystery, his spirit had passed from the morn to the sunset of that eventful day, during which the forsaken body, like a broken fetter, lay cold and dead in the chamber and on the bier? Did he tell how death looked from the immortal side, and how dark a contrast to those

bright scenes from which his spirit had been recalled was presented to his view when he returned to this world of change and weeping? These are the things of which we might expect him to speak to the bystanders. These are the things which above all others would interest us most deeply. There is no one who believes in a life beyond the grave, but must feel in his deeper moods a passionate longing to know something definite about its circumstances and experiences. That world lies so near to us, separated only by the thin walls of this fleshly tabernacle, hidden from our eyes only by this fleeting breath of life; it has already received so much of what was part of our own being, and is destined soon at the latest to receive ourselves, that it is but natural to cherish a feeling of earnest solicitude concerning it. In seasons of bereavement, we feel it hard to part with those whom we love on the boundary line betwixt this world and the next, and know nothing more about them, where they are or how they are. We stand at the gate that opens only inwards, and strain our eyes to pierce through the bars into the gloom for only one gleam of light to cheer our spirits. We wet its posts day by day with our tears; we implore from its silence one human sign, one token of recognition, however faint and fleeting. But all in vain! In

the ebon vault in which we wander, groping after our lost ones, we feel nothing but the cruel walls of darkness that hem us in, and hear nothing but the mournful echo of our own wild wail; and we are tempted at times to think that the bright heavenly world, where we picture them to be, is after all, as Kingsley beautifully says, only a gaudy window which our own fond imagination paints to hide the terrible blankness and darkness of the night beyond.

The lips of the widow of Nain's son were sealed upon those things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Frequent as have been the communications between heaven and earth, no voice has broken the silence of death, or disclosed the mysteries of the spirit-world. Our Saviour Himself maintained the same strange reticence in His last interview with His disciples. He had been crucified, dead, and buried, but He had broken the iron fetters of death; He had burst asunder the brazen gates of the grave; He had recrossed the dread river, and retraced His steps up the dark valley into the light and the land of the living. He stood in the midst of the little affrighted flock, and showed them His hands and His feet, took a piece of a broiled fish and an honey-comb and ate it before them; and by these homely signs convinced them that he was not a spirit, as they had feared, but

Jesus of Nazareth, their old Master and Friend. He was about to return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was ; and this was to be His last opportunity of teaching them. We should have expected, in these circumstances, that he would dissipate the mystery that shrouds the unseen world, disclose the true state of the departed, and in the fulness and freshness of recent experience, and in the affectionate open-hearted confidence of parting, drop some hint of what it is to die, beyond what the Scriptures reveal. And yet He said not a single word regarding what He had seen and heard during the three days when His body was in Joseph's tomb and His soul in Hades. He merely shed new light upon the old truth with which they were already familiar ; "opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures." He left, true, earnest Teacher that He was, that most grand and cheering declaration, in all its openness, breadth, and universal adaptation, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." And how opposed is all this to the so-called revelations of spirits, given to those who call themselves spiritualists. How can those who advocate this wretched creed bring themselves to believe, that what our Saviour



refused to disclose, what those whom He raised from the dead and those who had communications from heaven could not reveal, what is denied to the passionate supplications of the heart-broken in their desolate homes, is nevertheless granted to a cold and prurient curiosity. It is the hardest trial of human nature, in the hour of bereavement, as one has well said, to repose upon the silence of God; but surely it is better to do so than to seek consolation from spirit-rapping. It is better to wait patiently in the darkness and loneliness till the day break and the shadows flee away, than to seek to dispel the mystery by sparks of our own kindling and ghosts of our own raising—to create a delusive and unhallowed light by necromantic spells from the phosphorescence of the grave.

“And He delivered him to his mother.” Who can describe the unutterable gladness of that restoration? Who can depict adequately the mingled joy and wonder and gratitude that filled the widowed mother’s heart to overflowing? The revulsion of feeling must have been painful in its very intensity. But the Evangelist has left a veil over it, for there are feelings with which a stranger may not intermeddle. We can imagine indeed the joy of the widow from what we ourselves have felt when we have received

back to our arms again those who were almost dead, and regarding whom we had given up all hope. We know what it is to watch expiring life in our beloved, and as if by a miracle, in the very extremity of our despair, to see it kindling from its socket and waxing stronger and brighter. We remember that joyful sentence of the physician, "Out of danger," and the wild tumult of emotion with which it filled us. And oh! how often have we pictured the inexpressible happiness that would be ours, as we water our couch all night with tears, could we look once more upon the beloved dead eye to eye, and return them smile for smile. We would give all the world for such a meeting! And by our own experience, and by our own vain dreams and longings, we can imagine the woman's bliss. Truly the promise was literally fulfilled to her, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." And so is it, if we rightly regard it, to us all. Our release from sorrow is not only as sure as the covenant of God can make it, but it is very near. Our light affliction is but for a moment. If our cross be heavy, we have not far or long to carry it. And soon the death which divided will reunite; the wounds which he inflicted, his own hands will

heal; and we shall see our beloved ones again, and our hearts shall rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us.

In the smallest details and humblest features of Christ's miracles there is profound meaning, just as in the hem of His garment there was healing power. When so much has been left out of the record that we would naturally wish to know, we may be sure that nothing has been put in that is not essential to our thorough understanding of the miracle, and to our perfect learning of the lesson which it teaches. There is no mere ornamentation, no trick of rhetoric. It is in God's word as it is in His works. You see a minute crimson tint upon the upper lip of a blossom, and you think it of no consequence. You fancy that it is the mere result of chance, a drop of colour, as it were, that happened to fall accidentally and unnoticed upon that part of the blossom, from the laden palette of the Great Painter of the lilies of the field. But the scientific man will tell you that that tint has been placed in that particular position to guide the eye of the insect, by whom the plant is fertilized, to the point where, in search of honey, it may help to carry out the design of nature to propagate the plant. You thus see that the whole history of the plant, perhaps the welfare of the whole

human race, so far as it is dependent upon the produce of that plant, is connected with the little speck of crimson colour upon the upper lip of its blossom, which seems to you so insignificant, so accidental and purposeless; and that it is as full of meaning and as much in the mind and plan of the Creator and Upholder of all things, as the crimson glory of a sunset that sets the whole western heavens on fire. And so is it with the miracles of Jesus. The smallest details in them were intended, and are full of significance. When it is said that Jesus delivered the young man to his mother, we have in this homely and apparently trivial circumstance of the miracle an indication of what shall take place at the general resurrection. He who delivered the restored son to the arms of the widowed mother at Nain, will then reunite all the loved and lost who fell asleep in Him.

We know that the Son of Man will deliver us, when raised from the grave, unto God, the supreme object of attachment and highest source of happiness; and that in our unveiled communion with Him we shall never know again throughout eternal ages, as we have often known here, what it is to want a friend who can answer every call for sympathy, and cheer us with a ready response to every thought and intent of the

heart. But we need more than even this to complete the blessedness of heaven. Man needs more than the society of God. He wants his fellow-beings, his help-meets who are on a level with him. He who said in the earthly paradise, "It is not good for man to be alone," even although man had the great blessings of Eden and the glorious companionship of angels and of God Himself, knows that it will not be good for man to be alone even in the midst of the pleasures that are at God's right hand, and in the blissful society of all the hosts of heaven. And, therefore, He has provided for the association of the spirits of just men made perfect with each other. Those who fall asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him for the purpose of restoring them to each other. He will bring back the child to the mother, the husband to the wife, the brother to the sister, the friend to the friend, as truly as on earth He delivered the young man of Nain to his mother, the daughter of Jairus to her father, and Lazarus to Martha and Mary. Our bodies will not be raised from the tomb, and our affections, our truest and noblest self, be allowed to lie there. He who dowered this earth with such strong personal attachments, the sweetest and best things in it, will not deprive heaven of them. He who united two fond hearts by the closest and most endearing ties

of earth, will not beyond the grave, as the poet says, sever that united life in two, and bid each half live again and count itself the whole. Are they not as husband and wife heirs together of eternal life? The marriage union were but a poor image of the bond that unites Christ to His church, if it were loosed beyond the grave. It is true that there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven, for under new conditions there must be new relations; but it is only that which is temporary in marriage that is dissolved by death, while that love in it which is immortal is purified and perfected. If in this life only we love, to extend the words of the apostle, we are indeed most miserable, considering the preciousness of love, and the frail tenure on which it hangs—the warm nest upon the rotten bough. If on heaven's oblivious shore we have everlasting joy, but nevermore the friends that were dear to us here; if to die is the disintegration of love and reconstruction of it beyond the grave as an impersonal universal element, which all shall breathe equally; if the mansions of the blessed are denuded of special and particular affections, and everyone there shall be equally dear, and all shall be loved alike,—there is nothing attractive in the picture or prospect. We shrink from it with instinctive dislike. It is not what our warm human hearts

crave, for we know well that if we cease to love in the same way those whom we once loved, if we cease to love them with a positive, definite, individual love, we lose our memory and our identity; we cease to be ourselves. Our heart protests against such a doctrine as that, and blessed be God it exists only in the vain imaginations of ignorant men; it has no place in the Bible. In God's Word we are told that we shall have the most endearing society in heaven; that that society will include those to whom we were most tenderly related by nature or pious friendship, with whom we shall resume our old special fellowship, purged of all its selfishness, and perpetuated in the purest and most blissful form for ever. It is in order that God may deliver the friends and relations of earth to each other when He raises them up from the grave at the last day, that He commits the preaching of the gospel and the means of grace into the hands of men. It is in order that human beings in heaven, while they love all the saints with pure hearts fervently, may love special individuals with a special individual love, and may be bound to them by special ties of gratitude and affection, that He makes them here the instruments of each other's salvation. Why are children committed to the fostering care of parents, with the injunction from the Heavenly Father to

train them up for Him? Why are the ties of family and friendship so many consecrated channels through which the life blood of religion may flow from heart to heart? Is it not that the family of God in heaven may be linked together by the special ties that bind them here? St. Paul called, not the converts of St. Peter and St. John, his joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ's appearing, but his own personal friends; those with whom he had prayed, who had caused him sorrow and joy, and who wept at parting at the thought that they should see his face no more. And who can calculate the amount of blessedness which the reunions of such beloved ones, endeared by such special ties, will produce? Who can form a picture of the transcendent bliss, when Christ shall consecrate for evermore from the everlasting Throne the relationships formed here beside the altar and the cross, and shall say to the mother, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the son, "Behold thy mother."

"Known and unknown; human, divine;  
Sweet human hand, and lips and eye;  
Dear heavenly friend thou canst not die,  
Mine, mine for ever, ever mine."

But there is a fear mingled with this happy prospect, that in the glorified state too little of what we once remembered and loved will remain. We are afraid



that the restoration of our dead will be like the fabled Palingenesis of the ancient alchemists, by which a perished rose was supposed to be re-created from its own ashes, but without the former bloom and fragrance. Father, mother, child, will take on a new form, which, with all its glory, will lose much of the old familiar charm. But there is no cause for such a fear. We may be sure that when the Lord delivers the saints in glory to each other, it will be no counterfeits of the old friends that He will restore. Fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ they shall indeed be, but they will retain all that constituted their former identity. The son whom Jesus gave back from the grave to the arms of his mother was no phantom son, no pale unfamiliar ghost of the cherished past. It was the same form and heart that she had loved and guarded from his childhood. And so the friends that will be restored to us will be no new unknown beings, but our own old friends whose image our hearts keep so faithfully. We shall meet father and mother, sister and brother and friend—not an undistinguishable throng of spirits wearing the same glorified appearance—in that heaven, which is not a foreign land, but our native country, in that house not made with hands, which is not the temple of an abstract Divinity, but the home of our Father. Such is the happiness of individual love be-

yond the grave, for which our nature longs, and to which the glorious miracle of the resurrection will introduce us.

But, further, our Lord's act implies the restoration of those who have been raised from spiritual death, to the true recognition and right fulfilment of the common duties and relationships of life on earth. When Jesus brought back the young man of Nain from the dead, He did not say to him, "Follow Me." He had laid him under a debt of gratitude which only a life of devotion to His service could pay. The life which had been restored in so miraculous a manner might well be dedicated to his Saviour, and filled with works of faith and labours of love for His sake. And yet Jesus did not summon him to such a public ministry, did not require at his hands such a sacrifice of home, and friends, and ordinary business. "He delivered him to his mother." Within the circle of home, the young man would find his most urgent and sacred field of ministration. To be the joy of the lonely widow's heart, and the stay and support of the widow's desolate home, would for him be the reasonable service of God. The mercy required of him was better than all public sacrifice; the fulfilment of an only son's duty to a widowed mother would be more acceptable in the sight of God than the public following of Christ as a

disciple, while that duty was abandoned or left to others to perform. He who had compassion upon the widow when her son was lost to her in death, had compassion upon her lonely desolate circumstances when her son was restored to her. He who commanded the parents of Jairus' daughter to give her common food, after her marvellous resuscitation, delivered the widow of Nain's son to the duties of ordinary life, after He had raised him from the dead. He drew Matthew from the receipt of custom, and Peter and Andrew from the fisherman's nets, and James and John from the side of Zebedee their father ; He said, " He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me ;" and commanded us to hate and forsake father and mother and wife and child and house and land for His sake and the Gospel's. But He knew how dependent the widow was upon her son ; how desolate her life would be without him ; and therefore He laid no commands upon him that would conflict with his duty to her, but simply and freely delivered him up to her. And we can imagine what a mighty effect this extraordinary and unexpected restoration would produce upon the relations of mother and son to one another henceforward. Like Abraham, she received her son back from the sacrifice of death, invested with a holier character, and freed from the

dominion of self and the bondage of the world—freed from all the doubts, anxieties, and fears of a fond, foolish idolatry—a treasure henceforth to be loved with that holy and unselfish love, which is a foreshadowing of that which shall survive death and knit heart to heart in eternity. And how would the extraordinary event invest with a new sanctity all the duties and relationships of life to the young man himself! Returning wondrously adorned by the spoils of the kingdom beyond the tomb, he would shed the solemnity of his own spirit and the gratitude of his own heart upon the whole sphere of his experience. He would be a more loving son by reason of his brief but awful separation from his mother. He would fulfil more perfectly the claims of filial devotion, remembering how very nearly for him they were over for ever. Delivered to his mother from death, by the miraculous interposition of Jesus, we may well suppose that he was restored to all that constitutes the life of a true son in the household and of a true man in the world.

It is lawful, I think, to apply the case of the widow of Nain's son as an analogy to the case of a man who is converted. Jesus performs upon such a man a miracle greater and more wonderful than the restoration of the young man from the dead. It is, indeed,

a spiritual resurrection, a raising from a death in sin to newness of life in Christ Jesus. And, in the great majority of cases, our Lord delivers such restored persons to the common duties and relationships of life, to fulfil them more perfectly, in the light and power of their new experience. It is only one here and there, whom He Himself has specially qualified and circumstanced, that He commands, like Matthew, Peter, James, and John, to forsake all and follow Him. But how different is this from our ordinary conceptions! We imagine that there is only one stereotyped way of serving God acceptably. The idea is deeply rooted in the minds of many, that whenever they are converted they have received a call to follow Christ publicly, to forsake their old duties and relations, and take up new ones that will bring them more under the eye of their fellow-creatures. There is a prevailing disposition to consider the perfect image of a Christian life, to be the entire and formal surrender of all our powers and possessions to the work of teaching and evangelising mankind. Many base their ideas of a converted life upon Christ's command to the young ruler, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." But those who urge such "councils of perfection" do not seem to

know, that the command to the young ruler was an individual injunction, limited by individual specialities. It was given to the young ruler because it was applicable to his case and circumstances, because his riches were a snare to him, and stood between him and the salvation of his soul ; and to him it was not a "council of perfection," which he might reject if he pleased, but a command, to refuse obedience to which was to refuse to follow the only way that could lead him to eternal life. But Christ did not say to Lazarus, or to the young man of Nain, or to hundreds more whom He relieved, and on whom He conferred the greatest benefits, "Sell all that thou hast and follow Me." For most men, it would simply be wrong to do this ; as hurtful to themselves and to society as it would be foolish. The paths of perfection, although one in principle, differ widely in their form ; and they are determined in every case by peculiarities of nature and circumstances, which are the lines which God Himself has marked out, and the bounds which He has set. There are many administrations, but one Lord ; and if we only get rid of the besetting sin that hinders our perfection, we can make our life as beautiful and useful in the sight of God, while we fulfil the manifold obligations of life within the circle of the world's daily customary activity, as though we forsook

all and followed Christ publicly. We must remember that it was He who had no family ties, no home, no possessions, no aims or objects of a personal kind, who nevertheless consecrated family life, turning its water into wine, and took up little children in His arms and blessed them. It was He who called Matthew from the receipt of custom, and Peter and James and John from the fisherman's toil, to forsake all and follow Christ, who sent home the cured demoniac of Gadara to his family, to bear witness among old friends and associations to the mighty power of God, and delivered the young man of Nain to his widowed mother.

To a few here and there, now and then, specially qualified and specially circumstanced, He says in their conversion, "Follow Me," in the abandoning of common ties and secular duties, in order to lead a life of entire consecration to the public service of God. But the great majority of those whom He raises from a death in sin, and restores to spiritual life, He delivers to their old friends and their former duties. He recognises the first and foremost claims of family life upon them. Among old associations and habits that have become easy, they can testify most powerfully, and with least temptation to self-glorification, on behalf of their Master. The first and best sphere of

the young convert is undoubtedly in his own home, by his own fireside, among his own brothers and sisters; since those who had best known him in his dead unconverted state, who had followed his bier sorrowfully to the grave of sin, will be the most thoroughly convinced of Christ's miraculous power of restoration in his case. "The members of a man's own household, and the familiar friends of his own social circle, are the best judges of the genuineness of his conversion. It is very easy to put on seemings of godliness that shall deceive strangers; but that must be a true piety which, amid the daily vexations of life and the unrestrained intercourse of the home circle, bears the image of Jesus. The testimony of a man's parents, or wife, or children, or servants, or customers, or employers, to the great change that he has undergone, is worth all the certificates of church courts the world has ever seen. And it is at once a finer proof and a higher manifestation of vital godliness, to live every day in the family circle in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, than to go forth into the public high-ways to talk and preach about Jesus." Happy is he who is thus delivered to his mother by the hand of the Saviour; who finds the first believer in his restoration in his own mother, or wife, or child! Happy is the household that can say,



with the father of the prodigal, "Rejoice with us, for our brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

It is the home that, first after the heart, needs to be purified and elevated. It is the domestic affections and natural duties that require first to be sanctified. They were the first that felt the direful effects of the fall; they are the first and sorest that suffer from any course of sin. It is the father's heart, the mother's heart that is most grieved by the evil-doing of any member of the household. The home, the family circle, the natural affections, should therefore be the first to experience the blessed effects of saving and restoring grace. Domestic life without God and without spiritual hope becomes cold and hard and selfish. But, when the convert is sent back by Jesus to his home and family, it is in order to show that the mighty Hand that raised himself from the dead raised his affections too; and made him who was a bad son, a selfish husband, a hard father, a careless brother, full of tenderness and gentleness, and thoughtful, unselfish consideration in all these relations.

Religion, like charity, should begin at home. Here emphatically he that provides not for his own denies the faith and is worse than an infidel. That Christian benevolence which neglects religion at home for the

sake of carrying it abroad, is a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. That convert who talks of his experience in the religious meeting, and shows none of the fruits of it in his dealings with those connected with him, who is a saint in public and a selfish tyrant at home, is a hypocrite of the grossest type. And we may rest assured that if the home feels the influence of a man's conversion, that home will become a centre of holy influence to the neighbourhood. In proportion as it becomes more pure and loving, and more like the heavenly home; in proportion as the life and the love of Christ are acknowledged in it, and the family tie in consequence felt to be more tender and strong, so will the number of those increase who will endeavour to create such homes over the wide waste of the world, and seek out wider affinities and relationships yet unrecognised. The Christian love that takes in a race and a world has its root in the healthy and permanent centre of the home and the family. Go first, then, all ye who have been restored from the dead by the saving grace of your Redeemer, to the sphere where God hath cast your lot, to your own family, to your own social circle and common round of duties and relationships. Your own heart first, then your own family, then your own church, then your own country, and then the whole world.

This is God's great harmonious law of Christian influence. And remember that you are thus delivered to your home and friends by your Saviour in your conversion, in order that you may prepare them and prepare yourselves for the blessed final restoration of heaven, where the sweet relationships of life, purified from all the stains of earth and perfected for ever, will form one of the most blissful elements in the joy of the redeemed. You are delivered to your friends in grace here that you may be delivered to them in glory hereafter.

Upon the spectators the effect of the wonderful miracle was overwhelming. A great fear fell upon them, that strange instinctive fear produced by sudden contact with the invisible world, which we feel even in the presence of our beloved dead, on account of the awful mystery in which they are shrouded. They remembered Elijah, who raised the son of the widow of Zarephath just across their own northern border, and Elisha who raised the son of the Shunammite in the ancient village near at hand among their own hills; and they felt that a greater prophet than even the greatest seers of the olden times had come amongst them, for they with agonies and energies of supplication had recalled the spirit that had fled, but He had brought the dead to life calmly, inci-

dentally, instantaneously, in His own name, by His own authority and by a single word. They glorified God that the long period during which there had been no prophet, no supernatural sign, no communication between heaven and earth, nothing but the continuous motion of the wheels of Providence along the same beaten track, and the uniform action of the dull unchanging signals of nature that carried the general despatches of the universe, had come to an end at last, and God had come out from behind the veil of nature and broken the silence of heaven and visited His people. They had "open vision once more," and a sense of the nearness of heaven. But far short were their impressions and conceptions, however vivid at the moment, of the glorious truth. They had been so accustomed to separate God from man, that they could not conceive of any other connection between them, except what was arbitrary and infused by irregular, transient and local interpositions of an external force. They could not rise to the conception of a continuous, complete communion of the soul of man with God, in the indwelling of the Divine Spirit in man, which is the fundamental experience of Christianity. They did not know that heaven and earth had coalesced in the person of Jesus; that He who appeared to their sleeping an-

cestor at Bethel at the top of the ladder, had now appeared to them at the foot, in order that He might lift them up by the new and living way, by the successive steps of His own obedience, suffering, and death, from the degradation and alienation of sin to the calm pure heights of heavenly grace. The miracle of raising the dead was very wonderful to them, but a far greater wonder was the living presence of Jesus Himself. Even if, like John the Baptist, He had done no miracles, His perfectly pure and sinless life, in the mould of our human circumstances, was a far greater miracle than the creation of the world. The fulfilment of the moral law without us, in the person of Jesus Christ, is the miracle of miracles, which overwhelms the thoughtful mind with astonishment and awe. It is that which produces upon us the irresistible conviction that God hath indeed visited His people ; that He is the Word of God who came to reveal and declare His Father to mankind. And we have no further astonishment left when we are told that He did on earth what could be done by the power of God alone. God has visited us not as a mighty Wonder-worker merely, but as a Saviour by Revelation and by Hope ; and the true faith is that which looks up through Him to the Eternal Father in heaven.



CHAPTER III.

*THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.*





## ST. JOHN xi. 1-47.

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee : and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he ; and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit, Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him ; but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou has sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

## CHAPTER III.

*THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.*

THE raising of Lazarus is made by sceptical writers one of the chief crucial points in determining the authenticity of St. John's Gospel. An unfavourable argument is drawn from the silence of the other Evangelists regarding this event. It does seem strange that no reference should have been made by Matthew, Mark and Luke to an occurrence so great and startling in itself—which must have created a profound and widespread sensation at the time, and which led directly to the execution of those measures of vengeance which the Jewish authorities had long formed against Jesus. We should have imagined that an incident so touching in all its attending circumstances, and so illustrative of the very heart of Jesus, would have been naturally one on which the Evangelists would have delighted to dwell, and which all of them

would have described fully in their narratives. Why only a single Evangelist, therefore, should have recorded it, is involved in a mystery which we have not the means of penetrating, and which no explanation hitherto given is adequate to clear away. The common reason assigned, that the Synoptical writers forebore to mention the incident during the lifetime of Lazarus, lest it should attract the attention of the authorities and kindle their animosity against him—such considerations of caution having ceased to possess any weight when John wrote long afterwards and out of Palestine—breaks down at once because of its obvious want of verisimilitude. We cannot suppose that Lazarus would shrink from any personal danger connected with the publication of the miracle, when hundreds in that and the subsequent age willingly laid down their lives as a testimony to their faith, without imputing to him a cowardice unworthy of him, and casting him down from that lofty moral position which he occupies in the eye of all Christians, as the object of Christ's special personal love. Another reason given, viz., that the Synoptical writers mainly describe the events of Christ's life which happened within the region of Galilee, while St. John has confined his attention chiefly to Christ's career in Judea, has more apparent force, but it does not really explain

the difficulty; it is only a re-stating of it in another form. Besides, it is not in strict accordance with fact; for St. Luke, at least, depicts the latter part of Christ's life with even greater care than he bestows upon the earlier portion.

The difficulty is, however, greatly exaggerated. It is one that belongs to all the Gospels, which are confessedly and designedly fragmentary, and based upon a common oral tradition, or derived from a single document, which itself is a compilation, and, as there is ample evidence to show, a very fragmentary one. Each of them gives single narratives peculiar to itself, and yet no one concludes that, because only one Evangelist records a circumstance, it must on that account be untrustworthy. The difficulty in question is also essentially a modern difficulty, which would never have occurred to the Evangelists themselves. The disciples did not judge the miracles of Jesus by the standards which we arbitrarily apply, and classify them according to their relative greatness or difficulty of performance. We look upon the raising of the dead as standing apart from all the other miracles, as peculiarly unexampled and stupendous works, so inherently incredible as to require an amount of proof and circumstantial statement not needed in the other miracles. But the Evangelists grouped together every

class of miracle without distinction, and gave no more special relief or emphasis to the raising of the dead than to the healing of the sick or to the opening of the eyes of the blind. Indeed, the healing of a demoniac seems to have left a deeper impression, judging from the narratives of the Synoptists, than the restoration of a dead person. If the fourth Evangelist does lay more stress upon the raising of Lazarus than upon any other event in the life of our Lord—though, after all, it is not much more circumstantially and fully told than his own story of the opening of the eyes of the blind man in Jerusalem that occurred shortly before—it is not because He is conforming to popular estimates of degrees in miracles, but because the miracle was wrought, not casually and incidentally like the others, but specially and intentionally, as a *sign* manifesting the glory of God and witnessing that Jesus was the resurrection and the life, and revealed in itself and in the circumstances connected with it truths which such a mind as St. John's alone could adequately appreciate and communicate to others. We feel the miracle to be greater than any of the others, to be the crowning miracle of our Lord's ministry on earth; but there is not a single expression in the record itself which calls our attention to it as occupying that lofty position.

But although we cannot reach the final solution of the mystery in question, that is no reason why we should reject the narrative as a mythical poem, as a cunningly devised fable, or a mere transmutation of a sentence of Jesus into a history. It bears within itself the most convincing proof of its authenticity. It exhibits in its perfect artlessness and tender humanities the unconscious touch of nature and truth. No impartial reader but must be deeply impressed with its accurate circumstantiality; while the marvellous consistency and naturalness of all its details, and the beautiful breathing human life which it portrays, cannot but powerfully affect the heart. If it be not what it claims, the record of a wonderful historical miracle, then we are shut up to the conclusion that it is an amazing literary miracle, which no conditions of the time can account for, and which human art in all these enlightened centuries has never equalled. Instead of raising objections, therefore, on the ground of the silence of the other Evangelists, we should rather be thankful that one writer has been Divinely led, for whatever reason, to preserve for us this most precious and significant incident, and to dwell upon it with a fulness of detail such as we have in almost no other Gospel narrative. We cannot treat a story that reveals so much of the heart of God and man,

and that appeals to the most sacred and sorrowful feelings of the human bosom, as some have done, with the cold disinterested criticism wherewith we might study in its fossil form the animal and vegetable life of a long past geological epoch, even although we know that it could bear the severest scrutiny of that kind without injury. Touched to the very soul by what in it is beyond all criticism, and truer than all human science and philosophy, we kneel in awe and reverence and immeasurable gratitude upon the holy ground before the transcendent revelâtion.

There are links connecting all the Gospels with one another, and one of the most interesting of these is that which unites the story of Lazarus, as given by St. John, with the glimpse revealed to us of the quiet family life in Bethany by St. Luke. St. John presumes that his readers are already acquainted with the previous history of the family; and one of the most remarkable features in the two narratives is the coincidence between the characters of Martha and Mary, as depicted by the two Evangelists,—the active bustling solicitude of the one, and the quiet earnest thoughtfulness of the other; a coincidence which produces irresistibly the conviction of the truthfulness of the portraiture, and proves that it is no ideal creation that is described, but a living reality. The two sisters



speak and act throughout on the occasion of the miracle, in the characteristic manner for which St. Luke had prepared us.

Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in the village of Bethany. Much that we should like to have known regarding their previous history and private circumstances has been concealed, and only such a glimpse is given to us of their ordinary life as to make the wonderful incident connected with them perfectly intelligible, and to elucidate the development and discipline of their spiritual life. There is no provision made in the Evangelical history for the mere gratifying of curiosity. Whether Martha, who was evidently the oldest member of the family, was, as some have conjectured, a widow, to whom the house belonged, and with whom her sister Mary and her younger brother Lazarus resided; or whether the sisters managed the household of their brother, or what were the precise circumstances and relations which determined their domestic constitution, we cannot tell. Several things, such as the entertainment of Jesus, the number of friends who came from Jerusalem to condole with the sisters, the possession of a burial vault of their own, the alabaster box and the ointment of spikenard very costly, would seem to indicate that the social position, culture, and wealth of the family

were much above the average. With this family Jesus had the closest friendship. Their home afforded a quiet retreat to Him from the strife of tongues and the sordid passions of Jerusalem. Under their roof He had enjoyed that refreshing sleep which God gives to His beloved after the weary toils and cares of the day are over; at their hospitable table He had satisfied those common wants of humanity which He shared with us as partaker of our nature; by their hearth, when the evening lamp was lit, they enjoyed together that communion of heart and fellowship of holy thought which link the earthly with the heavenly home. And, added to these human attractions, were those which nature imparted to the spot. Jesus, as the type of pure humanity, had in its perfect form not only the deep and extended spiritual feeling for nature as the mask of God, which was the peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew race, but also the subtler and more poetical love of natural beauty for its own sake, which belongs to the western nations and to our modern days. He saw the true vision of the hills, and felt the deep soul of lonely places, and recognised the glory in the flower and the splendour in the grass. And for these feelings created by the enduring beauty of nature, —which give us a deep impression of our homelessness and inspire our immortality, but which deepened

the rest of His soul, conscious as it ever was of being at home in a Father's world,—there was ample gratification furnished by the scenery in the midst of which Bethany was set. Situated only about two miles from Jerusalem, the sound and sight of the great city were completely shut out by the long ridge of the Mount of Olives; and the view opened only on the distant Peræan mountains blending into the deep blue of the horizon, and in the foreground, on the desolate rocks that hemmed in on every side the steep descent to the valley of the Jordan and the shore of the Dead Sea, clothed with dark shadows of mystery, in keeping with the solemn associations of the region—the whole forming one of the most striking landscapes to be found in the south of Palestine. Around this lonely mountain-hamlet, hid in its secluded nook like a violet by its leaves, there seemed to breathe a milder climate, favouring the productions of a warmer zone, than that which belonged to the bare exposed altitude of Jerusalem. The modern village of El Azariah—poor, ruined, half-deserted—which stands on its traditional site, is embosomed even now among richer verdure than any other spot in the neighbourhood of the Holy City. But the ancient village was distinguished for even greater variety and luxuriance of vegetation. Its name, which signifies *The house of*

*dates*, indicates that the date-palm grew there; a circumstance which is still further confirmed by the palm-branches which the multitude tore down from the trees and strewed in the triumphal path of Jesus. This desert-tree, elsewhere unknown on the high temperate table-land which forms the main portion of Palestine, and confined to the sheltered tropical valley of the Jordan, must have formed a most beautiful and striking feature in the scene, investing it with a peculiar oriental charm. The olive and pomegranate clustered then as now around the dwellings, while the fig-tree cast its broad cool shadows over the gleaming pathways. To the susceptible heart of Jesus all the beautiful sights and sounds of the lonely village were natural ministers, bringing with them a deeper consciousness of Divine love and heaven. He understood their mystic inarticulate speech, and read their open secret, and had in the enjoyment of them, as the second Adam, refreshing and strengthening communion with the Lord God who walked with Him in this garden in the cool of the day.

In sacred geography Bethany is known as the town of Mary and her sister Martha, just as Bethsaida is known as the city of Andrew and Peter. No doubt it was so designated, in the first place, to distinguish it from another Bethany beyond Jordan, where John the

Baptist had begun his ministry, and to which Jesus had retired because of the persecution of the Jews; but there is a higher and more tender reason for this peculiar mode of identification. Whatever other claims to notice Bethany possessed, on the score of the beauty and peacefulness of its situation, the position and character of its inhabitants, and any associations connected with it, they were all absorbed in the one prominent fact that Mary and Martha lived there. The village was made specially interesting to Jesus on account of that circumstance alone. It was the affection of the sisters that endeared the spot to Him, and made it, to His mind, their own town, as if it had no other inhabitants or owners. And truly the love of Jesus to them has invested the spot with a renown greater far than is possessed by any birth-place of genius, or any scene of human heroism. There are Meccas of the mind and homes of the heart which derive all their interest from their connection with some noble thought, or tender feeling, or splendid deed. To all of us the scenes of earth are precious only because of their association with some one we love. Take away that association, and we feel ourselves homeless in the very scenes of our birth. America and Australia are to us unknown and uninteresting countries; until some friend has gone there,

and drawn our thoughts and affections to them. How desolate and lonely is the city in which we know no one; it has no connection with our life, it is a strange and alien place. But let us form a tender tie there, and henceforth it is known to us and loved by us as the home of our friend. It is love that baptizes and gives a name to every haunt of men, and every scene of nature; and all the interest and charm which any town or country possesses, radiate from some glowing hearth of friendship, or are reflected from looks that we love. Between Mary and the place of her residence there seems to be a harmony, which must have been present to the thought of the Evangelist when he places her name before that of her sister in speaking of this beautiful proprietorship of the heart. Nowhere else, we feel, could such a musing gentle soul have grown up, than in such a quiet and lonely mountain village. The scenery, and the home in the midst of it, the town of Mary, and the heart and mind of Mary, were wonderfully fitted to each other.

But a day came when a dark shadow which no light can exclude, or rather which the light of human love itself casts—for what enriches and sweetens life the most also saddens it the most—fell upon that peaceful and pious home. Lazarus was stricken down with one of those sharp malignant fevers of Palestine which

break out suddenly and pursue their course rapidly. From the first the dangerous nature of the sickness was apparent. If efficient help, therefore, is to be obtained, no time must be lost. In their sore extremity the sorrowing sisters sent for Him who had perhaps already proved Himself to be to them the Brother born for adversity, the Saviour of Israel in the time of trouble, or who, at all events, as they well knew, had manifested Himself as such to many others. Jesus at this time was far away among the deep defiles of the Peræan hills, on the other side of the Jordan, having withdrawn thither to avoid the active hostility of His enemies. He had gone to the place where His public ministry was inaugurated by the baptism of John, who first proclaimed Him to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. His life, after all its mighty developments and achievements, had gone back to the place from which it started. He made this deepest retrogression before manifesting His highest glory in the coming miracle. But the place of His concealment was widely known, for Jesus could not be hid, and many resorted to Him there and experienced such benefits from His hands as induced them to believe in Him. The message sent to Him in this distant spot from the sorrow-stricken home of Bethany is extremely touching in its brevity

and simplicity. "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." They did not ask Him to come and see them at once. They did not plead the urgency of the case, or appeal to His pity and help. They did not dictate to Him what He should do. They left Him to the perfect freedom of love, to fulfil the unassisted promptings of His own tender nature. They had the utmost confidence, not only in His ability, but willingness to help them; they knew that He would share their sadness with them, and bear their sorrow as His own. And therefore the simple announcement of their necessity they thought was sufficient. They judged by the fulness of their own heart of what must occupy His; and they knew that He was one who needed not that all the details and circumstances of their trouble should be opened out to Him.

Very beautiful and profound is the way in which they worded their message. They did not say, "He who loves Thee is sick." They drew the silent motive to constrain Jesus, not from any selfish feeling, but from the purest and most disinterested. They knew the ardent love that their brother cherished towards Jesus; and they might well have urged Him to come to their help on that plea. But, with the wonderful insight and delicacy of love, they rose above all per-



sonal considerations, tender and powerful as these might be, and appealed directly to Jesus' own heart—"He whom *Thou lovest* is sick." He who said, in regard to external gifts and blessings, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, meant that profound saying to apply in its fullest extent to all things, and most specially to the affections of the heart. To be loved is precious, but to love is far better. The power of loving is the noblest capacity and purest and deepest joy which is known to a human spirit, whatever may be the return that is made to it. Jesus loves the objects of His Divine friendship from the very fulness of His own infinite heart, and not because of their love. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and therefore He loves us, not for what we do for Him, but for what He does for us. It is difficult for our cold hard hearts to enter into this Divine feeling. We are naturally disposed to form our ideas of our Redeemer from materials which we find within ourselves; and being, as we are, in our fallen state, not only poor, but selfish, we are slow of heart to believe in the all-sufficiency of Divine love which wants nothing for itself,—in that freely-moving disinterested goodness which has no ends of its own to gain, but dispenses, looking for nothing again. Upon our natural aversion to believe the simple and

all-comprehensive truth that God is love, is built up all notions of merit. We think we must give to God some price or equivalent for His blessing. We imagine that He loves us only because we love Him; that He does us good only because we worship and serve Him, and give up some valuable consideration for His sake. Oh! when shall we learn the blessed truth contained in the sisters' message, and which passes before us in lines of living light on almost every page of Scripture! When shall we be able to believe that God commendeth His love to us, in that while *we were yet sinners*—while we had no thought or feeling of answering love to Him—while we were alienated and rebellious—He gave us the highest proof of love, in that Christ died for us. When shall we make our appeal in prayer to Him, not on the ground of our own love, but on the ground of His; and implore His aid for His own mercy's sake, confident that He who spared not His own Son will not withhold from us any good thing.

Is there not something in the very form and tone of the words, "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick," which speaks to us of that calmness in danger and that serenity in sorrow, we should antecedently expect from such a pious household. We see no rush of feeling which cannot be controlled;

we hear no useless lamentation. That they felt in their severe affliction with all a sister's tenderness we cannot possibly doubt, for the attachment of all the members of the family to each other was peculiarly deep and devoted. And yet, at a crisis, when those who felt far less would have lost all fortitude, they maintained the most admirable composure. They adopted at once the simplest and wisest plan the case admitted of. The effect of righteousness in their experience was what it is in every case, quietness and assurance. They had breathed so long the atmosphere of heavenly peace, of the source and centre of repose, that tranquillity became the very element of their soul; and now, when the sudden storm arose, the still small voice within bade the rising waves be still. And so is it always; the soul that is stayed on God is anchored by an inward calm whenever, and in proportion to the degree in which, all is consternation and alarm around it. Those whom Divine love has taught, and enabled to feel most deeply and lastingly, are always ready and able to act the part which duty and affection require; and when all that the occasion demands has been done and has failed, and not till then, nature takes its course, and the tears of sorrow flow. How different from those who have no such inward trustfulness or heavenly steadfastness, and who

are therefore tossed up and down by the waves, when some critical emergency comes, yielding to every impulse of fear and dread, and completely unmanned by emotion !

When Jesus heard the message, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." To the disciples in whose hearing He uttered them, these words must have seemed at the time the words of one upon whom the truth flashed not at once, but dawned by degrees. They understood their meaning afterwards, but at the time such must have been the impression which they produced. And there are not wanting individuals who, interpreting them in that light, have brought them forward as unfavourable to the pretensions of Christ to Divine knowledge. They accuse Him of predicting a false issue. It is evident, however, that the saying was uttered with reference to the restoration of Lazarus, which Jesus, who knew the end from the beginning, already beheld in spirit as accomplished. The obscure and enigmatical form in which it was put, was doubtless caused by Christ's design regarding the perfecting of the faith of the sisters ; for the words, while spoken in the hearing of the disciples, were addressed to the messenger, and were evidently meant to be the answer which he

should carry back to Bethany. It was part of the same process of discipline with the delay which He made in coming to the assistance of His friends. Sorely must the words of Jesus, when repeated to the sisters, have perplexed them. By the time the answer reached them Lazarus must have been dead. How were they to interpret Christ's confident assurance that the issue of the sickness would not be fatal, when in their darkened home was the terrible confutation. Could He have deceived them ; or could He Himself have been deceived? Was He after all He who should come possessed of Divine knowledge and power, or had they to look in their desolation for another? Thoughts like these must have passed through the mind of Mary and Martha as they kept the lonely and mournful vigil of death, and must have greatly disturbed their confidence in their Friend. Like the mother of Jesus, a sword would pierce their hearts, driven by the very Hand that would have shielded them from all harm. An inward conflict began in their souls regarding the character and claims of Jesus, out of which rich issues afterwards unfolded themselves, but which at the time must have been very grievous. The long trial of their faith was begun in the fire, not only of the sorrow of bereavement, but of that worst of all sorrows,

religious doubt. It is not too much to say that the mental anguish, now tending to faith and now to denial, alternating between fear and the defiance of fear, caused by the difficulty of reconciling the words of Jesus with the actual event, was keener even than the natural grief at their brother's loss. More precious than gold that perisheth was the faith destined to arise out of that fiery trial. We see the commencement of the process of purification, and we can almost notice a gleam of hope kindling in the darkness of the brother's death, and the greater darkness of the Saviour's words and the Saviour's absence. They were being prepared for the precious full-orbed truth of the words when they should be fulfilled; for the time when they should find an echo of them in their own hearts; and they should acknowledge with adoring gratitude that the sickness of their beloved brother was not indeed unto death, but was the birth-pangs and transition process into a higher life, and the dark background against which the glory of God in Christ should be seen by the world in greater clearness and fulness than it had yet been revealed.

That the sickness was intended not merely for the unfolding of the Redeemer's glory to the world, but also as a means of quickening the spiritual life of Lazarus himself, we cannot doubt. The glory of the

outward miracle of providence was designed to be the sign and symbol of the more wonderful inward miracle of grace. Little is revealed to us of the character of Lazarus. He is one of the "silent lives of Scripture." But the fact that Jesus loved him indicated that he must have been a man of high spiritual susceptibility, whose soul was a sanctuary for the deeper and holier thoughts that transfigure our nature. But, like Jacob, he may have had some dross mixed with the gold which needed the refining furnace of suffering. His faith needed the quickening of some strong excitement, some great and startling crisis in his life. His nature, like that of many who are weak and frail from their very amiability and loveableness, required to be strengthened by a sharp discipline of pain, as a sheet of white blotting paper, which scarcely hangs together, is made as tough as parchment by immersion in sulphuric acid. It has been suggested that Lazarus may be identified by many very striking coincidences with the young ruler whom Jesus loved. Of none other in the gospel history, save the beloved disciple and the family of Bethany, is that emphatic expression used. The answer given to the young ruler "One thing thou lackest," finds a corresponding echo in the words spoken to Martha, "One thing is needful," and are evidently indicative of the same

spiritual condition. The reverential attitude and salutation of the young ruler when he came to Jesus, the stainless purity of his outward life, his eager yearning after eternal life, and the feeling of a want which obedience to the law failed to satisfy—all these were personal traits such as we should have expected to find in the brother of her who had sat at the feet of Jesus and chosen the good part. His wealth and influence also agree with those which, we have every reason to believe, Lazarus possessed. It may be argued against this supposition that the young ruler went away grieved, without fulfilling the condition prescribed, and that Jesus allowed him to go away. But surely there is no necessity for construing the silence of Scripture regarding his after fate into evidence of his final rejection. There is no foundation for the vivid picture which Dante in his *Inferno* presents of him, as blown about like an autumn leaf on the borders of the other world, rejected by heaven and despised by hell, “the shade of him who made, through cowardice, the great refusal” :—

“L'ombra di colui  
Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto.”

We can hardly suppose that he would be allowed to perish in the enfolding embrace of Christ's love ; that



any one in whom Jesus felt such a profound interest would be permitted to disappear into the outer darkness, without some further effort being made to save him. It would be inconsistent with the whole character and conduct of Christ. That would be a harsh creed, indeed, which could easily reconcile itself to the idea that so noble and beautiful a soul had made utter shipwreck of life; that the love which Jesus cherished towards him, with all the yearning pity and the fervent prayer which it implied, was utterly wasted. Rather should we expect that, after a brief interval of hesitation and reflection, he who went away grieved again sought Jesus for the rest of soul which he could find nowhere else; and that some way of escape was provided for him out of all his difficulties into the fold of salvation. Christ's own words in connection with his departure, as Dr. Plumptre has well observed, may be looked upon in the light of a prophecy of his return, "With God all things are possible," and "There are last which shall be first." We may cherish the hope from these words that the young ruler, whose great riches stood in the way of his spiritual blessing, had been enabled to overcome the obstacle at last, and had actually entered, however hardly, into the kingdom of God.

Could we adopt this hypothesis of the identity of

the young ruler with Lazarus, it would explain much that is involved in deepest obscurity. We should have revealed to us the origin of the intimacy of Jesus with the family of Bethany, and we should understand more perfectly the reason why the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death, but for the glory of God. If Lazarus was the young ruler, he needed indeed the peculiar discipline of affliction to which he was subjected. Uninterrupted prosperity had hitherto crowned his life with its blessings. He had high position in the church and world, he had social influence and wealth, he had religious respect and the deep devotion of loving hearts who looked upon him with pride, and he had all the fresh ardent feelings and high hopes of youth, with a long bright career before him. But there was a want about him which uniform, long-continued prosperity produces in every man; a hardness, a selfishness, a worldliness, which impaired the bloom of his nobler qualities and corroded his inner life. The searching eye of Jesus discovered one dark plague-spot on the beautiful bloom of the fruit, which, if allowed to grow and spread, would reduce it to a mass of corruption. Something within him clung with a tenacious grasp to the pleasant attractions of his wealth and honour; while his soul was crying for God, the living God, and could find

no true rest, no pure joy but in Him. For this state of things some remedy, "impossible indeed with man, but possible with God," must be provided. What the loving looks and gracious acts of Jesus failed to mend, required to be corrected with the stern rod of chastisement. And he who could not be weaned from the love of his possessions to follow Christ fully and heartily by the loving voice of the Good Teacher, must learn in sore sickness the utter worthlessness of these possessions to satisfy the cravings of his nature ; and, abandoning them in death, must resume them again in his resurrection as a treasure of which he is only the steward, as a sacrifice laid upon the altar of God, and which therefore could never more be perverted to any selfish or sinful use.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had learned, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." We are not told the reason of the delay. Some have conjectured that it was occasioned by His unwillingness to leave His present sphere of labour. He had found beyond Jordan such a fertile field of usefulness, that He would not relinquish spiritual objects for the sake of rendering mere corporeal assistance. But this must strike every thoughtful mind as a very insufficient reason. It is perfectly

evident, from Christ's own words, that He was not detained in opposition to His own wish—that there was no local necessity urging Him to remain. He voluntarily deferred His journey, knowing the issues that hung upon it; and the Evangelist connects that voluntary delay of Jesus with the love which He bore to the whole family of Bethany—to the dead brother as well as to the living sisters. We must therefore conclude that His refusal to grant the letter of their prayer, was meant to be the fulfilment of the spirit of it; the fulfilment of it in a higher form. This delay was intended, we may well believe, to assist the faith of Martha and Mary, and to complete the process which His enigmatical words began. He meant to bestow upon them a higher blessing than the mere physical restoration of their brother, and for that higher blessing they were not yet ready. They needed the discipline of waiting, of patience, and trustfulness. Jesus acted towards them as He acted towards the Syro-Phenician woman, keeping back for a while what He was waiting and willing to give, in order by repression, like the restraint put upon a steel spring, to give a powerful stimulus to the energy of their spiritual life.

How dreary and desolate must have been that long interval to the lonely sisters in Bethany! How strange

and unaccountable must have seemed the absence and neglect of Jesus! Did no hard thoughts of Him pass through their minds? The fever increased in violence until at last it snapt the silver cord, and broke the golden bowl at the fountain. Death, outrunning love, came instead of the Life. We can suppose Mary sitting still in the house beside the bed on which her brother had breathed his last, and wondering at the absence of Jesus, until faith itself was on the point of swooning in the vacant gloom. And we can picture Martha going out to the rocky path that led down the deep descent to the Jordan, looking earnestly and wistfully over the distant prospect, shading her eyes with her hands, and brushing away the frequent tear that she may see more clearly. We can see her in fancy watching and waiting hour after hour, glancing down the long reaches of the white road, with a thrill of expectation as some lonely figure comes into view far away, and with a heavy sinking of the heart as the figure approaches and shows a stranger and not the eagerly expected one. Oh! this tarrying was severe and unaccountable to the sisters, but it was the gracious discipline of Divine love. Out of this bitter root was to spring up a beautiful blossom and a delicious fruit.

And is it not often so in the experience of God's

people still? In the season of affliction how frequently does the sore struggle last through long hours of darkness! Through the weary watches of the night how often is the cry heard, "O! that the day would break, and the shadows flee away." God does not deliver His people in the first moment of danger, when the first wail of the tempest is heard and their feet are merely dipped in the foaming billows that lash the shore. He permits them to sink in deep waters and all His billows to go over their soul before He comes to their rescue. He does not allow them merely to be brought to the brink of the furnace of affliction; He permits them to be placed in the midst of the flames, in the hottest core of it, and leaves them there until the anguish becomes almost insupportable. He not merely places the cross of trial upon their shoulders for a moment, that they may feel its weight and sharpness, but He leaves it upon them day and night; He commands them to carry it for weeks and months, and sometimes even years, until they are so bowed down under the weight that they cannot look up. This seems strange procedure on the part of God to the natural eye. It seems inconsistent with the love and tenderness of One who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and who in all our afflictions is afflicted, to treat His

people in this manner. One would naturally suppose that His very love for them, His very sympathy with them in their trial and danger, would prompt Him immediately to interpose; that He could not bear to look on while they were suffering without stretching forth His hand to relieve. God is said to be a Father who pitieth His children, knowing the frailty of their frames, and yet He suffers them to endure what no earthly father would permit. Were a father to see his son in danger, he would waste not a moment in running to his assistance. The mother does not wait till the last extremity before rescuing her child. At the first cry of alarm she flies to succour. And is Christ less pitiful, less loving? No! He is more truly tender and merciful than any earthly relation, and his tenderness and mercy are shown more by delaying than by hastening to deliver. Were He to regard merely our temporal happiness, He would remove the trial as soon as we felt its sharpness. He would act as we naturally wish Him to do; for man is impatient of evil, fumes and frets under it, is anxious to be delivered from it as speedily as possible, regards it as the element above all others he would wish away, that which stands out against him as repugnant and superfluous. But Christ, in leaving us under the power of trial for a time, in allowing us to be tossed up and

down in Adria for many starless and moonless nights, in suffering us to contend till the fourth watch of the night with contrary winds and drenching seas, consults our interests, not our wishes, our highest and lasting good, and not our temporary convenience. He wishes us to lose our life that we may gain it. It is the discipline of waiting to suffer and grow strong; and in proportion to the length of the waiting will be the benefit conferred. It is well for us, through this wise delay on the part of Jesus to come to our help, to feel our own weakness and insufficiency by a thorough testing of our own powers, to look on our right hand and left, and find no succour; for then, in that hour of our own extremity, in the fourth watch of our night of trouble, Christ will come over the raging billows—no spectre, but a blessed Divine Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost, whispering words of peace and comfort to our souls, “It is I, be not afraid.”

And how is Jesus occupied during this delay, while we are contending with the storm of trouble? How was He engaged when the disciples were in the midst of the Sea of Galilee in peril of their lives? We are told that He was alone on the shore, pouring forth His soul in prayer. Strange picture; wonderful contrast! That solitary figure kneeling under the stars,



and casting His shadow before Him on the brow of the mountain, calmly holding high commune with His Heavenly Father ; and that group of pale-faced, terror-stricken disciples far out on the foaming sea, struggling for dear life with the furious storm ! Oh ! how the thought is fitted to encourage us to wait with patience till the fourth watch of the night comes—though the waters swell high and the winds roar loud—the thought that Jesus is interceding for us. While we are struggling with the billows of time, He is on the eternal shore, hidden by the veil of darkness that separates this world from the next ; He is on the mount of God, on the right hand of the throne, praying for us that we may be strengthened and upheld and made conquerors and more than conquerors. He is watching us from that elevated standing-point which no storm can ever reach. His eye marks the rise of every billow and the shrinking of every nerve. He knows our frame ; He remembers that we are dust. He knows the force of every storm we encounter, the strength of every temptation that assails us, the weariness and anguish of every trial that is laid upon us. He has felt all that we can feel ; and therefore He will not suffer us to be tempted *above* what we are able to bear, but with every trial will provide a way of escape. You think and say, under the pressure of

your trial, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" but there is no speciality or originality in it. It has been borne by thousands, and borne by Him who is our Forerunner in suffering; who is the Prince of sufferers. It is the fellowship of His sufferings that we are required to share. And how does His sympathy add intensity and point to His intercession for us. The fact that He feels all that we feel, that He has passed through the same trials that are desolating our souls, and the remembrance of which is as vivid in His mind as the scars of the cross are fresh in His body, gives a fervour and power to His intercession of which we can form no conception, and makes it all-prevailing with God. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

"For the prayer of those who suffer  
Has the strength of love and death."

We now come to a pause in the narrative. The light forsakes the darkened home at Bethany, and shines upon the scene of our Lord's labours beyond Jordan. We know not how the sisters of Lazarus spent the strange interval of silence and desolation, while they waited in vain for the Divine help upon which they had so confidently reckoned; but a glimpse is given to us of the manner in which Jesus

and His disciples spent it. The Evangelists record a conversation between them, which shows that the spiritual discipline of the disciples was comprehended in that of the sisters. The miracles of Jesus have a wide reference; and just as in the natural world multitudes of special uses and individual advantages in detail are secured when a supreme law is obeyed, so, in the works of Jesus, many received benefits from them incidentally besides those who were the direct objects of them. The woman with the issue of blood was cured while Jesus was on His way to raise the daughter of Jairus, and the disciples were being taught and trained in the discipline of Martha and Mary. The delay that was so sorrowful and unaccountable to the sisters was made the means of blessing to His own followers. After remaining two days in Bethabara, engaged in His work of teaching and healing, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judæa again." To the disciples this must have been an extraordinary announcement. They remonstrated with Him on the apparent capriciousness of His conduct. It was but recently that He had escaped from a cruel death with which He was threatened by His Jewish enemies; He had now secured a quiet retreat, where He was safe beyond their reach, and where He might carry on unmolested His blessed work with as much success

as on the western side of Jordan. It looked to them, therefore, like folly or madness to leave this haven of security and go voluntarily back to the scene of danger, there to tempt His fate. No doubt the solicitude which they expressed for His safety arose from devoted attachment to Him; it was as sincere as it was earnest. But there mingled with it a selfish element. They were anxious about their own safety at the same time; for they well knew that their own fate was involved in His, that His enemies were theirs also. They did not like, however, to give expression to this selfish feeling in the presence of one so pure and generous; but it came out very clearly afterwards in the blunt and open speech of Thomas, who took it for granted that to return with Jesus to Judæa was to die with Him. They put their anxiety entirely on the ground of the almost certain death which awaited Jesus Himself. While their words were apparently as unselfish as those of the sisters, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick," they had not the same true ring of disinterestedness in them. From this base element of selfishness the disciples must be purified; they must learn to go with Jesus, whatever may be the consequences to themselves, and regard the call of duty as superior to all other considerations; and the discipline to which they were subjected was the very best means

of accomplishing this end. Their faith was also tried. They had low unworthy ideas of the power and mission of Jesus. They reduced Him to the level of an ordinary man. To correct these ideas, Jesus uttered to them a parable, which should have the same effect of exercising their powers of spiritual apprehension as the enigmatical message which He addressed to the sisters of Bethany. By similar means, He was educating both to a clearer and fuller understanding of His Divine nature and methods of working.

Light is one of the great key-words of the Gospel of St. John. By this most beautiful and expressive image, Jesus is frequently depicted. In the vivid lines of this sublime picture-language, He declared Himself to be the spiritual and eternal light which should reach to the sin-darkened and uttermost parts of the world, and should not only guide His followers, but be in them the light of life. It was a favourite image with Him. He used it often and in various forms. And to every thoughtful mind it must be a matter of deep interest that He should have chosen as the highest and holiest symbol of Himself—in whom is no darkness at all, but who for that very reason is dark to us, because light alone can comprehend light—that object in nature which is dark

with its own brightness, and contains within it such hidden hues of loveliness, such marvellous powers and strange mysteries; that force in nature which is the calmest and stillest, the most uniform and enduring, the most powerful and necessary, and which, for these very reasons, is the hiding rather than the manifesting of the Divine power. In the parable before us, the reference to this symbol is most simple and instructive. "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." There is such a blending of the outward and the inward, of the natural and spiritual, in this suggestive remark—such a mixing up of what refers to the Saviour and of what can only be applicable to the disciples—that the parable is well-fitted to test the extent of their spiritual discernment. The natural reference in it is easily understood. Day and night are contrasted with each other as the season of activity and the season of repose. Day is the time allotted for exertion, in which we can walk about in the transaction of our business. And this time set apart for our calling has its determinate limits; the day in Palestine being divided into twelve hours, which were longer or shorter according as the light broke earlier

or later with the season of the year. During this period of activity the sun shines brightly, and by its light men can move about freely and fearlessly without risk of stumbling, and perform their task with ease and pleasure. But, should a man reverse this natural arrangement, and walk about at night when he should be resting, and work while he should be sleeping, the darkness would magnify the ordinary difficulties and dangers, and he should be continually running the risk of injuring himself and injuring his work. This natural reference to our periods of alternate work and rest being regulated by the orbs of heaven, is exceedingly grand and solemn. Emerson strikingly says, "This age has yoked its waggon to a star." It makes use of the great forces of the universe in its daily work, harnesses the powers of steam to its machinery, and sends its messages to the ends of the earth on the back of the lightning. What a lesson should this teach us in spiritual things! If we navigate our ships by the positions of the stars—if we transact our daily business by the light of the sun—if we carry on our intercourse with the world by means of the lightning of heaven—should we condescend in the sphere of the soul to the use of things relatively lower? Not by the vain appearances of earth, but by the glorious realities of heaven, ought we to live; not

at the things seen and temporal should we look, but at the things unseen and eternal; not by sight, but by faith, should we walk; not in man, whose breath is in his nostrils, should we trust, but in the Lord Jehovah; not upon ourselves should we depend for the means of salvation, but upon Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; not under the powers of this world should we act, but under the powers of the world to come. Here we are creatures of days and months and years, regulated by sun and moon and stars, which will perish; but, born anew in Christ, we enter into eternal life—into a kingdom where time has no existence, where one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

But this leads me to consider the application of the parable—the special meaning which Christ intended the disciples to discern in it. He applied it first to Himself. As our Redeemer, Jesus placed Himself on the level of humanity, and had a day of work given to Him—His appointed period of life on earth. That day was of a fixed, determined length. Of Him it could be said, in a sense in which it could not be said of any one else, that there were twelve hours in His day of life. He was born expressly to die. He came into the world to fulfil a given task, and to live a certain number of years. His times, in a more signifi-



cant manner than ours, were in the hands of God. He says Himself that His actions were continually regulated by the foreordained order of God. When *His time*, as he called it, was come, He did what He was appointed to do ; and abstinence from work was always put upon the ground that His time was not yet come. Till, therefore, His allotted task was accomplished, His enemies could have no power at all against Him. "I must work the works of Him who sent Me," He says, "while it is yet day, for the night cometh in which no man can work." And while He was about His Father's business He was safe everywhere—in Judæa as well as in Bethabara—under the broad shield of the Almighty's protection. No evil could possibly shorten His life until the last moment of the twelfth hour had struck the knell of doom. But, besides the length of the day, there was the light of it. Doing the will of God, He should walk in the light. No premature darkness would obscure the path of duty ; no shades of evening would descend to hinder the performance of His allotted task. No purpose of His own was taking Him to Judæa. He did not seek voluntarily and rashly to place Himself in the way of danger. He had a gracious mission to perform ; and He knew that, while engaged in that work of mercy, He should have not only the Divine

protection to defend Him, but also the Divine light to guide Him. He should have the cheering light of God's countenance upon every inch of His path, and throughout every moment of the twelve hours of His day; and within His own soul the blessed sunshine which comes of the single eye that is fixed upon God, and of the weaned will which has no object or aim but His glory.

But the parable applied to the disciples also. They, too, had their day of life measured out to them; and nothing could hasten prematurely its close, or abridge the ordained length of it. Engaged with their Master in doing good, the same Divine shield that protected Him would defend them from all evil. Fearing God, they had nothing else to fear. While with Jesus, they bore a charmed life. Going with Him to Judæa, He who shut the lion's mouths when Daniel was cast into their den, and made the fiery furnace, into which the three Hebrew Confessors were thrown, as harmless as the crimson light of sunset upon a cloud, would guard them safely from the hands of their enemies. And, besides the Divine protection, they should have the Divine light. They should have their way made plain to them; they should have no doubt or difficulty about it; they should breathe the pure air which God throws around the "sons of light;" and have within

them that Divine radiance which purifies and glorifies the soul, and is the very joy and sunshine of life. Such would be their blessed experience while they walked with Christ along the path of duty. But should they, on the other hand, be self-willed, and seek to accomplish their own objects instead of the will of God ; should they prefer safety to duty, and personal comfort to encountering difficulties and dangers in doing good to others, they would be like one walking abroad at night, stumbling over obstacles in the plainest path, and meeting with dangers in the most familiar scenes. They would encounter worse enemies amid the apparent security of Bethabara than awaited them amid the hostile haunts of Judæa ; while the light of the Divine favour would be withdrawn from them, and they would be left dark and lonely and forsaken.

To us, too, the words of Christ have a profound significance. God has given to us a certain period of time in which to do His work. It may be short, or it may be long, but it is sufficient for the work. Till that work is done we are immortal. Nothing can deprive us of the residue of our years. On the path of duty we are as safe as the arm of God, on which hang the shields of the earth, can make us. Noah preached righteousness, and the floods could not touch him ;

the three Hebrew Confessors would not bow down the knee to an idol, and the flames could not consume them. God's hand held up these witnesses for the right, and saved them without the loss or harm of a thing that they loved. And so, whether we pass through fire or water, neither the one nor the other can harm us while God is with us. Sealed by His Spirit, with His name on our foreheads, the winds and storms are held in leash by the angels, who are our ministering spirits, so that they cannot hurt us; and, amidst the crash and wreck of the Last Day, when all created things shall rush to ruin, we shall lift up a serene and fearless brow, for, having the Spirit of Christ, we are in harmony with the order and beauty of all the worlds. Yes! the man who stands with God stands absolutely beyond reach of harm. The man who seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness may dwell "quiet from the fear of evil;" no blight can wither him, no malignant influence can compass his ruin, till the last moment of his day of life is ended, and all his work is finished. But, more than this, such a man is not only the king of circumstance—and all providence becomes to him special providence—but he has the clear conception and full conviction of what is right and good and true—that bright vision of the holiness of God—that prompt instinct of

what is the best course to do in difficulty and trial—which proceed from purity of heart and singleness of aim. The sunshine of his own spirit will reflect itself upon all his life; and, while others stumble over rough paths in darkness and perplexity, he walks confidently along a path of pleasantness and peace in the daylight of God's smile. Beyond the mists in which his fellows are groping, he sees all the beauty and brightness of this world, and all the glory of the next—things which are eclipsed by the shadow of a false life.

After Jesus uttered this beautiful parable, He spoke no more on that occasion, and probably went on with His ordinary work of teaching and healing the multitude. During this interval Lazarus died, and Jesus knew the fact from His own Divine consciousness, for we cannot suppose that a fresh messenger had been sent from Bethany with news of the death, else the Evangelist would not have omitted the circumstance from his minutely accurate narrative. But while announcing the fact thus known by the intuition of His own spirit to the disciples, He veiled it in a continuation of the same enigmatical language He had formerly used, and for the same reason, viz., to test their faith and spiritual discernment. He speaks of death, in the language of heaven, as a sleep, "Our

friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep." Sleep is so natural an image of death that it is as old as the human race. It is common to all nations and languages and religions. A corpse, immediately after life has fled, is so like a body hushed in its nightly repose, that the idea of death being but a sleep is irresistibly suggested. Humanity has ever cherished the fond belief that in death consciousness is suspended, but not destroyed; that something remains to link the dead with the living. But it is the Christian religion that has disclosed the full beauty of the image. The words "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" on the lips of Jesus have a precious significance. They assure us that the universal belief of mankind is not a poetical imagination, the wish being father to the thought, but a blessed truth; that death, like sleep, is distinctly and absolutely a process of life, of refreshment and reconstruction, benign and beautiful as are all evolutions of life. The image, indeed, does not impart much information to the mind. It leaves death as mysterious as ever. Sleep and death, the twin-brothers, are born out of the same womb of primeval mystery. What sleep is we cannot tell any more than we can tell what death is. The most familiar thing in life, that comes to every human being every twenty-four hours, in which

we spend a third of our whole time, and by which, as the poet says, our whole life is rounded, we are yet profoundly ignorant of its nature. Death and sleep are among those things which we think we understand best, and yet can explain least, for it is their very simplicity that baffles us. They are so simple that they cannot be resolved into anything simpler. They are so entirely themselves that we can only say that they are what they are. But while the comparison of death to sleep does not give us much insight into its nature, it at least robs death of its terror and soothes the bereaved heart; for our own experience, a thousand times repeated, has convinced us that sleep is a refreshment and a rest, and if death be a sleep, then we need not fear to fall asleep in its cold embrace, we need not fear that our beloved ones are utterly lost to us when they have closed their eyes in this mysterious slumber.

Jesus shared this sinless infirmity of our nature as He shared all others. We read that He slept the profound sleep of exhaustion in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, taking His rest in the bosom of the storm. That thought makes our sleep sacred. It gives a deeper meaning, a new tenderness to the words, "He giveth His beloved sleep." We resign ourselves more trustingly to the arms of repose every night, when we

know that the omniscient Eye that watches over us once yielded to human weakness and closed in sleep. A sleepless God is an awful conception, but the thought of a Saviour who laid his weary head on a human pillow, and subsided into unconsciousness under the same heaven with ourselves, is inexpressibly sweet, and awakens by the conjunction a most strange association of nearness. An eye that never closes, over which no film of darkness, no cloud of slumber can ever gather, seems to us terrible in its sublime exaltation above all human infirmities. Like the burning cloudless sky of the East, it seems to scorch and weary us with its dazzling uniformity. But an eye that has closed in sleep, on which the dim mists of temporary forgetfulness have gathered, seems to us unutterably tender in its human susceptibility. It is like the soft weeping blue skies of April in our northern clime, flecked with snow-white clouds, that refresh the soul as well as the body. We look upon our Brother in His human sleep more tenderly than even in the mercies and charities of His working life. We are moved to ask "What manner of man is this?" in the deep sleep of exhaustion more than in the fresh power of quelling the storm. "The very heaven of sky and star that ceils the august chamber of His sleep," as it has been beautifully said, "is more sanctified from



beneath than before it was from above." And when we associate with the idea of our Saviour's human weakness the idea of His Almighty power, we have, in the blessed combination, the assurance that He who shared our sleep on earth now watches over us, on the throne of glory, with a vigilance and a tenderness which nothing can evade or overreach to harm us. It is, if we think aright of it, a terrible thing to lose our consciousness, even in sleep; to be drowned, as it were, out of active life for a brief space, even in the refreshing Lethean waters of slumber, to yield to dumb forgetfulness a prey for a few hours, even though it be to refresh and invigorate it, this pleasing, anxious being. Children instinctively feel this, and dislike to go to bed, and fight against sleep as long as possible; and though we who are grown older and wiser seek our pillow every night as a refuge from care, as a rest from toil, and count sleep as our kindest friend, still it is because of our heedlessness and callousness that the feeling of the child does not come back to us, and we seldom think how solemn, how awful it is to give up the control of our being without knowing what is to become of it, to yield ourselves to a power which may carry us whither we would not. How sweet, then, to give our souls to Christ to keep, to commit the interests of our being into the hands of

Him who shared our infirmity that He might be tender to it; who knows the sleep of the weary, the careworn, and the sorrowful, not by His Divine knowledge merely, but by His human experience, that the recollection of His own sleeping moments on earth might make His sleepless vigil over us, when we are locked in the arms of repose, if possible more gentle and faithful; that there might be the feeling of the loving mother bending over her sleeping babe, combined with that of the all-powerful Creator watching over His creatures enjoying the rest needed to fit them for new labours and new sorrows. And how sweet in the end to take the last long sleep, when the toils and sorrows of life's weary day are over, to lose our consciousness in death under the shadow of His cross, in the arms of Him who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, and thus to pass through the darkness of time into the morning light of eternity:—

“ ‘Sleep soft, beloved!’ we sometimes say,  
Who have no power to charm away  
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:  
But never doleful dream again  
Shall break the blissful slumber, when  
He giveth his beloved sleep.”

Very precious, too, are the words in which Jesus speaks of Lazarus, confirming and deepening the

blessed truth that death is but a sleep. He calls him "our friend;" and how brightly do these words stand out against the dark ideas we commonly entertain of death! Death is perfect isolation, the loneliest of all things. It separates a man from his true self; one part of his nature from the other. It cuts off the body from communion with its world. The eye can no longer behold the sunlight, or the lungs breathe the vital air, or the organs of the body assimilate the vital food; these elements of its life are around it, but it is insensible to them all. It cuts a man off from the society of his fellows; the dearest friend cannot enter into the chill, worse than polar, solitude that encompasses him. All communion and ministry of love are at an end. It is a deep dark abyss into which the light of God's countenance itself seems hardly able to penetrate—

"So lonely 'tis that God Himself  
Scarce seemeth there to be."

Death is the most individualizing of all things. Each one dies by himself, even when a plague or the rout of an army slays its hundreds of thousands. And yet the words of Jesus Christ tell us that this awful loneliness is only in appearance. He shows the other side of death as a grander fellowship. Lazarus, though

dead, is still not only the friend of Jesus, but the friend of the disciples also. The ties which bound them together in holy fellowship have not been severed by death, for they regarded not the body, but the spirit, and fell under the powers of the world to come. Lazarus has gone to join the great majority; he has entered through death into the society of all the saints that ever lived; and, though separated from the friends he left behind, he is still related to them. The separation between them is only partial, for believers here and believers in the other world make but one communion. It is sin alone that separates friends on earth from friends in heaven. It is sin that breaks every tie here; it is sin that breaks every tie beyond. 'No departure to the utmost bounds of the universe can so separate spirit from spirit, as does the slightest deviation of the one from the path of holiness in which the other is walking with God.' So long, therefore, as we keep from sin and follow holiness, we are not wholly parted from those who have left us behind in this vale of tears. We continue in their communion; we partake with them of the same celestial food; we are sensible of the same God who fills both heaven and earth, time and eternity—who filleth all in all. Like the mariner who crosses the equator, and while the old familiar Plough has disappeared from the

sky, and the strange new constellation of the Cross shines lustrously overhead, sees the same sun, only of brighter ray, in whose warmth and light he rejoiced at home ; so those who cross the mysterious boundary of death see new secrets of the heavens—glories unrevealed to our eyes darkened by the shadow of this earthly hemisphere—but the same Sun of Righteousness which shines with intense light upon them makes our beautiful daylight for us here. The transition, or distance, that changes all else, does not change Him who has no parallax, no shadow of turning ; and from Him, and one another in Him, neither life nor death can divide us. In answer to our Saviour's prayer, we all are one—one after the image of God's unity, and consequently of God's eternity—for that which is indissolubly united will last for ever. Death makes no change to the love that is purified by the Divine ; and heaven and earth are one. All that is sweetest and loveliest in those who have gone from us remains with us as an inalienable possession. Our friends die to us only when we forget them, or cease to love them ; and that which dies within us is the saddest part of what death takes away. So long as we love and remember our dead, they are ours always and truly, for life is love and love is life. The living may change to us, or we to them ; sin may divide and strife come between the

dearest friends, but the beloved dead remain the same to our memory and to our love forevermore.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” To us these words have now a higher meaning than they could have had at that time to the disciples. Jesus has since died and risen again. And now we are planted together in the likeness of His death. Death is a solitary thing no longer. It is now the centre of attraction and unity to all who fall asleep in Jesus. What we thought was the very root of division, becomes now the very ground of union; and where darkness seemed to reign absolute and alone, we now apprehend a communion of light and love in which there is no darkness at all. He whom all His disciples forsook in death—who had felt forsaken of God Himself—has, by going through that awful experience, robbed death of its loneliness; and, planted *together* in the likeness of His death, we are no more perishing creatures, divided from each other by the little passing interests of earth, and only united by that great curse which is at last to terminate these interests and our connection with each other for ever, but we are held more closely together by the bands of a perfect human fellowship which death cannot break, because the Love which established them had in death proved itself to be stronger than death.

It is probable, too, that by the endearing expression which Christ used, "our friend," He desired to arouse the sympathy of the disciples with the fate of Lazarus. They were absorbed in selfish regard for their own safety; but, by speaking of Lazarus as *their* friend as well as His own, He wished to draw them away from their selfishness, and impress upon them the duty which they owed to the dead. As a stranger, Lazarus might have no claim upon them; they might have regarded his death with that transient interest which the funeral of an unknown person passing through the street awakens in our minds; but, as their own friend, he has a right to their affection, and to all the sad offices of love which a living friend can pay to a dead one. How touchingly, therefore, does Jesus appeal to those instinctive feelings of our nature which the sorrow and death of our friends produce in the breasts even of the most callous and selfish! And how skilfully does He make those feelings conduce to accomplish the gracious purpose which He had set before Himself! Not for His own sake was He going to encounter danger in the land of His enemies, but for the sake of the disciples also. They were as much concerned in the object of His mission as He was Himself, for was not His friend theirs?

"But I go that I may awaken him out of his sleep."

Some critics have dared to say that "the Christ whom John paints is ostentatious in His miracles." Where is there any ostentation here? Simpler terms could not have been used to describe the stupendous miracle which they imply. Instead of boasting of and exalting the great work which He was about to do, He talks quietly of it as only awakening a man from sleep. We hear no sounds of triumph, no swelling words of vanity from Christ. He does not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. With the Divine calmness and self-possession so characteristic of Him, so always characteristic of Divine power, He alludes to the greatest of all His achievements on earth. So gentle and still are His words that the disciples misunderstand their meaning. They cannot suppose that He could thus have spoken of death and a raising from death. To them the sleep to which He alludes is only a natural repose, and they say, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." They thought that the crisis of the fever had come, and that Lazarus was now enjoying that long, refreshing, peaceful rest which is an indication of a favourable change in the dangerous illness. Combining these words, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," with the assurance given before that his sickness was not unto death, they were persuaded that he would not actually



die. They were therefore not concerned about him, and they could see no reason why Jesus should expose Himself and them to danger when all was going on favourably without them.

The language of heaven was not level with the dull apprehensions of the disciples. They thought that Jesus spoke the common dialect of men. And assuredly, if out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, we need no other proof of the degeneracy and fall of man, than the meaning which is attached by general consent to some of the terms that are in common use. How exclusively, with reference to temporal concerns and earthly interests, do we understand the ordinary terms of salutation. We utter such courtesies of speech without ever considering accurately what they mean; and, did we thoughtfully analyze and define them, we should be astonished to find how completely our higher hopes and wishes are excluded from them; how entirely they refer to the welfare of the body, and ignore the well-being of the true man, the soul. We cannot, of course, avoid using the language of the world now, for it has woven itself so completely into the texture of ordinary life, and is regarded as so much a part of the habits of our nature, that to speak in any other way would be considered pedantic. Were we to use the

language of heaven on the streets of earth, our speech would be as unintelligible to society as the speech of Jesus was to the disciples. If we should speak of death as a sleep only, the world would laugh us to scorn as the hired mourners did to Jesus. We need to have our language, as well as all the habits of life, elevated by our Christianity. We need to have its terms expanded and ennobled by what has made ourselves new creatures.

The disciples could not reach to the height of Christ's great argument. He therefore stooped from heaven's figurative language to the common speech of men. He dropped His language of tender indirectness, and told them plainly and explicitly, "Lazarus is dead." How dreary and cold is this common speech of the world! It has no gleam of light upon it, no heavenly tone in it. Lazarus is dead; and there is an end of all hope and love and life; a cold mist descends and obliterates heaven and earth; a dark abyss opens up and swallows everything. No more can be said but these dull dead words, that are as dark and cold as the thing they imply. But Jesus will not let these common-place words of the world, which He is obliged to use, fall alone upon the ears of His disciples; He will accompany them with words of eternal life. He will anticipate a difficulty which

might arise in their minds as to why He was not on the spot to save His friend: "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe." Had Jesus been beside his couch, Lazarus would not have died. In the presence of the Prince of Life, death would not have dared to hurl his dart. Had Jesus arrived while the fever was going on, He who was never present at a death-bed would have found it impossible, in the bosom of the family He so much loved, to resist the entreaty to restore the patient to health. He would thus have added another work to His many works of healing, but how much would have been lost to the world! Strauss, and others like him, pronounce it immoral in Christ to let His friend die in order to glorify Himself. But this is a complete misunderstanding of Christ's design. We know that it was as easy for Him to raise a dead as to heal a sick man; and in permitting the sickness of Lazarus to run to a fatal termination, it was not to exalt the miracle, but to accomplish purposes of grace which the mere healing of the sickness would not have effected. Through that death a higher life was about to arise. Through Christ's absence a greater revelation of the glory of God was to be manifested than could have been given by His earlier presence on the spot. For our sakes, as well as for the

sake of the disciples, Jesus restrained His Almighty arm, and delayed His help to the last extremity. Had He interfered sooner, we should have missed the sublimest proof of His triumph over death before He suffered, the exquisite sympathy of His tears, His wise and tender dealing with the bereaved sisters, for which nothing else would have compensated us. Four days of bitter anguish would have been saved to Martha and Mary, but consolations which eternity alone can measure would have been lost to them and to us. Joy to the man of sorrows was rare, and its zest was always salted by a touch of woe. But it was ever a noble joy; a joy that could look beyond sorrow and death, and snatch its effulgence from their very gloom. He was glad that the things of eternal life were hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. He was glad that Lazarus was allowed to die, that the disciples might be able from that depth of sorrow and death to climb to higher heights of faith than they had hitherto reached, and might attain, against the dark background of that woe, a brighter recognition of Himself as the Lord of life and death, than they had ever yet compassed. The faith of those whom Jesus loved was more precious to Him than their happiness, and their eternal interests of more concern than the blighting of any temporal

well-being, or the extinction even of the natural life itself. To the intent that the sisters and the disciples might believe, might understand more thoroughly who He was, and to confide in Him more implicitly, He spared not Lazarus. To the intent that we might believe, God spared not His own son! And, if it is necessary, in order to increase our faith and deepen our love, God will not spare us any of the trials through which the precious result can be accomplished.

When Jesus announced His intention of going to Lazarus, notwithstanding that he was dead, Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Only on three occasions is this disciple brought before us, but the traits of character which he displayed on these occasions are in such beautiful harmony as to give us a vivid portrait of him. He was evidently of a gloomy and desponding disposition. He looked naturally on the darkest side of things, and walked by preference on the shady side of life. Thought predominated in him over action, and intellectual reflection over self-surrender and trustfulness. His faith was slow; he could not believe without very clear proof. But he was a warm-hearted, generous man, and therefore, although he believed he was going to certain death, he hesitated

not to cast in his lot with Jesus. All that his Master had said about His own safety and the safety of all who accompanied Him on the path of duty, had produced no effect upon him. But he counted it better to die with Christ than to live without Him. To raise this weak faith up to the level of the strong devotion which his resolution implied; to make his trust in Jesus as the Divine Son of God equal at least to his trust in Him as his own loving human friend, was to be the discipline and the triumph of the miracle about to be wrought. And we know that that miracle helped, among other things, to produce such a change in the doubting, desponding disciple, that he who now hardly ventured to go with Jesus to Bethany, afterwards fearlessly travelled to the ends of the world without Christ, proclaiming among innumerable perils the blessed gospel of the resurrection, which had lifted himself above all fear of death. For strengthening the belief of such a man, even although it did nothing else, the death of Lazarus was not too great a sacrifice. We, too, have doubts and fears such as Thomas had; but no doubt ought to prevent us from doing our duty; no fear should hinder our devotion to Him who so loved us that He fearlessly gave Himself for us. And if we seek to imitate the single-eyed resoluteness of Thomas, our faith will be increased

as his was. That which held Thomas to his belief in Christ, in spite of all his intellectual difficulties and the force of circumstances, was his personal love to Him; and that which will hold our soul fast, and bring it back even after it has been to all appearance carried away, is also personal love to Jesus. We can retain this love even amid all our doubts and difficulties; and it will enable us to wait and suspend our judgment till we can look fairly at those doubts and perplexities, and face them, assured that, come what may, nothing can come between us and our loving Saviour. And on the darkness of that devotion which follows Christ on the path of duty even unto death, assuredly will break the clear full light of a faith that can never more be shaken.

About all the dealings of the Divine economy, as revealed in the Gospels, there is a wonderful domesticity, if I may use the expression. The majestic event of the Incarnation is ushered in amid family details which might belong to any common home. We read about the manger, and the little child, and the swaddling bands, and the Virgin mother, and the birth-day greetings and gifts, just as we might read an account of the circumstances connected with the birth of an ordinary infant. At first sight, the greatness and significance of the incidents do not strike us; so

purely familiar and natural do they appear. But, when we ponder them, we feel deeply that thus it behoved the Son of Man to come into our world; we feel how strictly accordant with the intimate relationships established between God and man, and between man and man, by the Incarnation, are all these domestic details. We are apt to convert into dry spiritual doctrines, what, in the first instance at least, were living human experiences; to exalt the truths that concern our salvation above flesh and blood; above the naturalness of human life, as if they had nothing to do with it, and belonged to another realm altogether. But, rightly considered, the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus concerns itself with almost nothing else but ordinary human life. The love of God is only *natural* affection—the first affection of the human heart before it yielded to other false unnatural loves; and, therefore, all that the Gospel aims at is just to bring back this first love. We know the love of God, whom we see not, the apostle tells us, if we love the brother with whom our daily common life is spent; we know the goodness of the Lord, to which we cannot reach, in the goodness of the excellent of the earth, who are our associates; and what we do to the least of Christ's disciples, whom we have always with us, we do to Christ Himself, whom we have not



always. The hidden mystery of the plan of redemption is taught to the heart of the child long before its head can understand it, beside the altar of a mother's knee, where a perpetual sacrifice of self-denying love is ascending to heaven, and a constant mediation of tenderness and mercy is carried on. The Christian graces are only, so to speak, the natural human affections and impulses, purified of all their selfishness and sinfulness. The Christian life is the ordinary life lifted above its sordidness, and made pure and beautiful by the heavenly sunlight; the duties and relations of Christians are the eminent heights of the duties and relations of all human brethren; and the Church of God, in its true idea, is not the contrast and counterfoil to the world which Christ has redeemed, but its bright exemplar. All that is truly and substantially human is but the pattern of that which is Divine. "All the hard stones of theology, carve and chisel them as we will, fit into the quiet walls of our Father's house—the boundless and everlasting home."

This naturalness and domesticity, characteristic of all Divine things, is very instructively displayed in the story of the raising of Lazarus. The supernatural is so blended with human things that it scarcely seems to rise above the natural. How easily do the sublime revelations of Divine love fit into the ordinary ways of

a mourning household! There is no incongruity between them; they seem part and parcel of the same experience. The Divine doings of Jesus take the mould and pattern of ordinary deeds appropriate to the occasion; and His profound and far-reaching sayings are not uttered oracularly, and at a great height above human levels of thought and feeling, and clothed in formal special modes, but in such conversations with the disciples as one human being might have held with another, and in such interviews with the bereaved sisters as earthly friends have often had with one another in seasons of darkness and sorrow. What, for instance, can be more simple and natural than the circumstances in which Jesus revealed Himself to Martha as the Resurrection and the Life? That revelation shaped itself according to the character, the words and acts of Martha. It was drawn forth from the occasion as it rose. It borrowed its imagery from the associations of the moment. We should have expected that such a glorious truth would have been proclaimed in a set and formal discourse, on a grand occasion, and to a grand assemblage. But Jesus uttered it in a transient conversation, at a chance interview, in a sudden reply drawn forth by the appeal of a sorrow-stricken woman who came forth to meet Him alone. Nothing can be more homely than

the way in which the Evangelist describes the encounter ; and yet, into these simple, homely circumstances, was cast the most sublime and significant truth that has ever been uttered in our world—a truth that has done as much to enlighten its spiritual darkness as the primeval command, “Let there be light,” did to illumine its material darkness.

“Then, when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.” It is not likely that the sisters would have sent a messenger to Christ until the worst symptoms of their brother’s illness had appeared ; and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that Lazarus died in the night which followed the arrival of the messenger, and, according to Jewish custom, was buried the day after. Jesus remained two days in Peræa, and though only a single day was needed to traverse the distance from thence to Bethany, between twenty-three and twenty-nine miles, we can hardly suppose that He made the whole journey in one day ; for in that case he would have arrived on the evening of the fourth day, and would consequently have had no time to do those things which He is said to have done immediately after His arrival. We are shut up, therefore, to the conclusion that He must have stayed over the night somewhere on the road, and arrived early on the fifth day. This

computation will remove all difficulties, and verify the fact that Lazarus, from the time of His burial until Christ appeared on the scene, was four days in the grave.

Owing to the nearness of Bethany to Jerusalem, many of the friends of the family came from thence to condole with the sisters in their sore bereavement. These friends from Jerusalem are significantly called by the Evangelist "Jews;" a peculiar term which he uses to denote the leaders of the opposition to the teaching of Christ, as equivalent to scribes, elders, and Pharisees. The connection of the family of Bethany with that class is another coincidence between the young ruler and Lazarus; whilst the large number and high social position of the sympathising visitors are such as we should have expected, on the supposition that Lazarus and the young ruler were one and the same. Besides the friends from Jerusalem, the peculiar construction of the sentence in the original would lead us to infer that there were also present in the darkened dwelling mourners from Bethany itself—the well-known neighbours and familiar associates of the sisters. According to the Jewish ceremonial of grief, thirty days were usually set apart for the lamentation of the dead, which was conducted in an ostentatious and tumultuous manner. Each day had its own peculiar cere-

mony prescribed to it. During the first seven days the friends and acquaintances of the deceased came to visit his surviving relations ; and as such visits were reckoned among the Jews as "acts of mercy," and were deemed very meritorious, none omitted this mark of attention who had the slightest acquaintance with the departed or with his family. Such a ritual must have often proved a weary and burdensome form to those who truly mourned their dead. The presence of so many who were mere acquaintances, and of others who were only pretended friends, and came only because the duty was inculcated by a religious law, must have been very irksome on such a trying occasion, when the heart longs for solitude, and, like the deer, which seeks when wounded the profoundest depths of the forest, would avoid the crowd, and seek refuge in lonely brooding over the grievous hurt. But, though often formal, the sympathy of those who came to condole with Martha and Mary on this occasion seems to have been genuine. They fain would have comforted the sorrowing sisters, but they could not. Their presence on the scene, however, served another and even higher purpose. They were collected together in the providence of God that they might witness the mighty miracle which was about to be wrought. The other miracles of raising the dead

took place in Galilee, among a rude and simple-hearted people, who clung to the literal beliefs of their fathers, whose religion lay in action and their faith in obedience. But the raising of Lazarus was accomplished in the neighbourhood of the Sacred City, in the midst of spectators of an entirely different order—students of the law, teachers and leaders of Israel, who had been brought into contact with Greek intellect and Roman thought, who were trained up in all Jewish subtleties, and who were keen critics of evidence. It was therefore wisely ordained that the greatest of the wondrous works of Jesus should have for its witnesses the representatives of the highest learning and social position in the country.

Jesus did not come directly to the home under whose hospitable roof He had spent so many pleasant days and nights. He knew that it was filled with those who were His enemies and who had been the cause of His banishment, and that therefore there was no room or welcome for Him among them. He would not expose Himself on such a solemn occasion to their unseemly hostility, or mar the sacredness of the house of mourning by being the occasion of bringing into it the rancorousness of human hatred. Not in such an uncongenial company would He wish to meet for the first time the sorrowing sisters after their

bereavement, and speak to them those words of tender sympathy and love which would be profaned if heard by other ears. Such an interview must take place where there would be nothing to disturb it; amid the calm, solemn quietude of nature, with the deep blue sky above, and around those bright and lowly things in the enjoyment of which, seeing that they are the heart-work as well as the mind-work of God, there is balm and repose for the sorrowful, and sweetest communion of the creating and the created heart. Have we not all felt as Jesus did on this occasion? Does He not interpret to us in this human experience a craving of our own heart? There are places where we cannot bear to meet with those whom we love, the first time after some grievous trial has befallen us; and times in which we cannot speak to them of that which oppresses us amid the ordinary surroundings of our life. We must find some congenial spot more in harmony with the state of our spirits, some occasion in which the trivialities and hard circumstances of daily life cannot distract the solemn engagedness of our heart with its sorrow. Who would like to bid farewell to a beloved friend, going away perhaps for ever to a foreign country, at the door of an inn, or beside the crowded gangway of a ship? Who would like to meet a dear brother or sister

coming home after long years of absence on the public street, or amid a company of comparative strangers? The heart instinctively seeks on such tender and trying occasions some quiet resting-place, where it may be free from all prying eyes and curious ears, and pour out unrestrainedly its wealth of love or its burden of sorrow. Outside the village, therefore, beneath the shadows of the palm trees that formed a belt of verdure around it, not far from the spot where Lazarus was buried—for when Mary came out to meet Him the Jews thought she had gone in the direction of the grave to weep there—His affections, as it were, oscillating half-way between the home of the living friends and the last home of the dead friend. Quietly as He had come, desirous as He was of avoiding all observation, His presence soon became known. Tidings of the arrival of Him for whom she had so long and anxiously waited in vain were brought to Martha. Perhaps she may have been occupied out of doors, in conformity with her active temperament, seeking to relieve by the performance of some necessary duty the depression of her spirits; and in this way she was the first to hear of the coming of Jesus; while Mary, in her deeper and stiller sorrow, may have retired to the seclusion of her own room, and thus put herself out of reach



of hearing the rumour. At all events this much is evident, that while the one sister knew of the arrival of Jesus, the other sister was ignorant of it. We cannot for a moment suppose that Mary would have remained in the house had she known that her beloved Lord was so near at hand. She would have hastened out with the swift impulse of love to meet Him; and as John outran Peter on the way to the sepulchre, so Mary would have outrun Martha on the way to the place where Jesus was. Love would outstrip zeal, and be the first to pour out its wounded wail at the feet of the beloved. And in this circumstance, too, we see the different characteristics of the two sisters. The well-known and opposite peculiarities of their nature are stamped upon the narrative with the seal of truth. Martha appears the more promptly active, and through her active habits she heard of the approach of Jesus. Mary appears quiet and retiring, and through that shrinking, retiring habit no rumour of Jesus' coming had reached her. We can imagine that the grief of the two sisters was manifested in modes corresponding to their different temperaments. Sorrow in the case of Martha would be pushed aside by her bustling energetic temperament; while in the case of Mary it would press heavily upon her heart, because she could not divert it into any outward

channel. The sorrow of Martha would be like a fresh-lit watch-fire sending up great clouds of smoke, making its presence to be seen afar off; but the sorrow of Mary would be like that watch-fire when the flames have assumed their full force—showing least when burning most, and glowing with intensest heat when, owing to the absence of all smoke, the distant watchers fancy that it is extinguished.

Very characteristic is the conduct of Martha when she went to meet Jesus. She begins immediately to converse with Him. No mention is made of any preliminary greeting, any words of welcome or sorrow. At once she proceeds to utter the thought with which her heart is burdened, to express her regret that He had not come sooner to prevent this sad calamity. The very same spirit of complaint, when she was indignant that her Lord and her sister cared so little for what she cared so much, finds utterance. She is still the old Martha, if not cumbered with much serving now, at least careful and troubled about many things, losing in fretfulness and worry the calm central repose of her spirit, and still needing the reproof, "One thing is needful." But we cannot fail to observe that the discipline of sorrow is doing her good; we see a little melting and toning down of her anxious disposition, a little calming of her activity and self-dependence

into trustfulness, a little elevation of her hard practicality, busy only about the necessities of the lower life, into the spiritual insight of a soul that is able to look earnestly at the things that are unseen and eternal in the heavens. She no longer allowed herself to be entirely engrossed with her domestic duties, for no sooner did she become aware of the Saviour's approach than she turned away from them to the higher interests that now demanded her attention; feeling that in the presence of Jesus she would get the one thing that was more needful and helpful than all her own activities. She left behind all her company of friends and guests, with whom it would have formerly delighted her to talk, and whom she would have rejoiced to serve with her best. Miserable comforters were these rulers and Pharisees, who had come with their stock of formal common-place consolations learned by rote. She leaves them, and seeks the presence of One who is greater and holier than them all. And though her first words to Jesus show the old spirit of querulousness and fault-finding, we discern in them, at the same time, a fuller recognition of His wisdom and power. The conviction that His presence would have prevented the death of her brother was in itself no little evidence of a higher faith than she possessed before. "Lord, if thou hadst

been here, my brother had not died." She thought that had Jesus been able to come immediately when He was summoned, when her brother was still alive, He could have offered, by the side of his fever-stricken couch, such an effectual fervent prayer as would have not only prevented death, but restored him to health and vigour; and they might at this moment have been rejoicing over a living, instead of mourning a dead brother. But the opportunity had passed away; Jesus was too late to do any good; the beloved life had fled, the grave had claimed and closed over its own; and nothing now remained but idle tears and unavailing regrets. Alas! the experience to which Martha here gives expression is not singular. Whose faith has not been tried by a thought like hers? Who has not made similar reflections upon the conduct of earthly friends, or the course of events, or the treatment of the physician? If such a person had come at the critical moment; if only another measure had been adopted, and this treatment avoided; if something else had been done instead of what has been done, then the result might have been different, and the beloved life would not have been sacrificed. Nay! do we not arraign Providence itself in the anguish of our regret? Had the hand of Omnipotence but interfered, though only for

a moment; had but the faintest whisper of the Divine voice bidding the fever be still and death depart, the bereavements which have shadowed all our pilgrimage might have been averted. It is ever the bitterest drop in the cup of human anguish that it might have been otherwise. Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are those, "It might have been." If Thou hadst been here, oh! God of Mercy! my brother, my wife, my child, would not have died. It is indeed the hardest trial of faith to feel and know that it is just because God has been here that our beloved one has died; that this death which darkens all our home and all our life is but the overshadowing of His wings of love; that His hand has been still and His voice silent in truest kindness alike to the dead and the living; that it is owing to the presence and not to the absence of the Sun of Righteousness that—

"There cometh a mist and a weeping rain,  
And life is never the same again."

But there is a hope at the bottom of Martha's hopelessness. Too late it may seem; all human help may appear to be vain; but there is something within her which bids her still trust in God. Faint and far-off is the thought that comes to her sorrowful soul, like a ray from another world, but she cannot but

allude to it. "But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." We see the sear and peeled Aaron's rod, as it were, of her faith, visited in the darkness and loneliness of her bereavement with a sudden thrill of spring-time from on high, putting forth in the presence of the True Light a wreath of snowy blossoms, and exhaling to Him its beauty and fragrance. The process of budding and blossoming in that darkness, through which rays the pale glory of the Shechinah cloud, goes on before our very eyes. It may be that Martha, like Peter on the Transfiguration mount, wist not what she said when she uttered these words—that there was some confusion of mind and heart, caused by her sorrow and the glory of Jesus overpowering her. It may be that she had not shaped her hope out of the formless mist of possibilities, or dared to give it any definite colour of life. It may be that her expectations did not rise so high as an actual restoration from death for her brother; for, if so, she could hardly have said at the door of the sepulchre, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." But still her faith, in the absence of enlightenment, clung to Jesus. She rested her hope upon the power of His prayer, though she knew not what that prayer might accomplish for her. A man so holy and heavenly, so full of faith and good works,

must command the ear of heaven ; and God must give to Him some signal token of His regard.

How high, and yet how poor, were her thoughts of Jesus ! As a man, she had the highest conception of Him ; she exalted Him to the utmost as one who had more power with God than any one else. But as yet she had not discovered His true glory as the Son of God, who needed not to pray, but had all things committed into His hands. The mist had not yet passed from her eyes ; and, through the veil of His earthly lowliness, she could not discern the light of His indwelling glory. She thought of Him only as another Elijah or Elisha, who obtained by prayer from God what He wished, but she did not know that He Himself was one with God ; and the word she used for “ask,” a word which in the original Jesus Himself never employed to express His own asking of the Father, indicated that she had as yet no conception of His authority, as One in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Still, in spite of dimness of apprehension and unworthy conceptions, she clung to Him whom she felt was in some unexplainable way mighty to save. Nor was her faith, perhaps, entirely unsupported by evidence ; she probably knew that Jairus’ daughter and the son of the widow of Nain had been raised by Christ from the dead. And, although their

case was different from that of her brother, in the circumstance that her brother's body, she could not doubt, had already begun to see corruption, yet the words reported by the messenger, "This sickness is not unto death," created an impression that, since Lazarus had died, they must be susceptible of a further and grander meaning than she had first attached to them. Martha knew that whatever Jesus asked of God, God would give it to Him. We have a higher ground of confidence still. He who prayed for others had to pray for Himself, when overmastered by a struggle beyond endurance and overwhelmed with a horror of great darkness. We read that in Gethsemane, "being in an agony, He prayed." The remembrance of that prayer will never fade from the Redeemer's mind. In our Gethsemane, no angel merely, but Jesus Himself will come to help us, if, being in an agony we pray. He may not remove the pain or the misery under which we are suffering; even for Christ these were not removed; but peace and strength and hope will come, and we shall be able to bear anything that God sends, and to see shining on the blackest cloud of anguish, that seems to shroud His face from us, the rainbow of His mercy. Jesus has said that if we ask anything in His name, He will do it for us. Whatever is for our true good will



be given to us for His sake. Our prayers will not be like the prayers alluded to by a celebrated Greek poet, which were scattered by the winds before they reached the portals of heaven. They will be so answered that "the solemn silence of our Gethsemanes will be broken by the music of tender promises, and its awful darkness lightened by the sunshine of heavenly faces."

Jesus saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again." This declaration is indeterminate. Jesus doubtless meant by it to assure Martha that the deep, though unuttered, longing of her heart would be granted. But, like the famous oracular responses of old, it might be understood in a two-fold sense; and, in this way, it was a test of her faith; it was thrown out in this form to show how far she could interpret and realize its meaning. It embraced the near and the distant resurrection; and, had her faith been perfect, it would have spanned them both: it would have grasped all the present and prospective significance of the response. But Martha's faith could only attain the hope that was afar off. But that hope was not made faint and nebulous in her mind because of its remoteness. Clear-cut and distinct as a mountain ridge on the horizon, that great article of her creed stood up on the background of her faith. With unhesitating confidence she says, "I know that my

brother shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." It was much that she could say that, if we consider the current beliefs of the time. Very dimly and scantily did the Old Testament refer to the doctrine of the resurrection; so dimly and scantily that one of the great sects of her nation accepted the five books of Moses only on the avowed ground of their containing, as they imagined, no allusion to it; and even our Saviour Himself, in answer to their cavils, could only draw the doctrine from one passage in the Pentateuch, and even that by imputation. It had no mention in Jewish law, or symbol in Jewish worship. It was never recognised as a fundamental article of faith, or appealed to as any motive to exertion, or upheld as any comfort in trouble. Nowhere in the writings or sayings of all the saints and godly men of old have we so clear, full, and explicit a declaration of the truth of the resurrection as we find in the words of Martha. It was the belief of the Pharisees, in which she was educated; but no Pharisee had ever given it so unequivocal an expression. It rises up through all the clouds of doubt and unbelief peculiar to her age and nation as the culminating point of Jewish faith, and therefore fit to receive that illumination from heaven, which He alone could give who brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel.

It is a marvellous truth—this truth of the resurrection, which is the new fact upon which Christianity rests its claims—which Christianity asserts to be itself a Gospel. For upwards of six thousand years there has gone on uninterruptedly a wholesale destruction of the human race. Countless millions have gone down age after age into indistinguishable dust, to be blown about by desert winds, or washed away by ocean waters, or sealed amid the eternal hills, or to form the mould from which we reap our daily bread, until this fair world which God has blessed has become one huge sepulchre in a garden. And yet we are told by our religion that, one day, over this vast valley of dry bones the Spirit of God will breathe from the four winds of heaven, and bone shall be knit to its fellow-bone, and the sinews and the flesh shall come upon them, and, bursting the long bondage of the grave, they shall all rise up an exceeding great army of living souls. Our religion tells us that, universal as is the reign of death, equally universal shall be the triumph over it; that as surely as every living man must die, so surely must every dead man live again. Death may hold him long, and bury him deep in the bowels of the earth or sea, but the handful of dust shall be found again, and at the voice of the Son of Man it must live. It is a most wonderful and

difficult conception. The doctrine of the resurrection is not one that is discoverable by reason. Men have been accustomed, in the cycle of the natural seasons, when the earth in spring starts up from its long winter sleep, to see a symbol and a never-failing prophecy of life rising out of death, and to regard the Easter of nature in its outbursting of bud and blossom, and springing up of fresh growth from apparently dead seeds and bulbs, as giving a pledge or an intimation of a higher Easter in store for man. And philosophers have pointed to the transformations of the insect passing from the condition of a grub, through the motionless repose of the chrysalis, to the free and brilliantly-winged condition of the butterfly, as the type of a nobler human transformation. But these so-called analogies afford no evidence of the truth of man's resurrection. There is, in reality, no true correspondence between them. The fair blossom from the seed; the winged insect from the chrysalis; these common familiar illustrations are examples of rejuvenescence, and not of resurrection. These living things do not spring from previous dead and decomposed forms, but are simply the outcome of a latent life that has never for one moment been interrupted; and before we can use such analogies as arguments in favour of the resurrection, we must be shown some

germ of vegetable or animal life, ground into dust and scattered by the winds and entering into the composition of other bodies, whose materials have nevertheless been gathered together anew, and its old life restored unimpaired. But of such a process in nature there has never been a single instance. There has never been in all the physical world a single example of life raised from actual death; all its revivifying processes attach to things which are alive and representative of life. The doctrine of the resurrection of man is absolutely unique; it is a pure doctrine of revelation. But, although we cannot discover any evidence of it in nature, or prove it by any analogy that we can find out, still, when the Bible tells us that such is God's great purpose in regard to our race, we must accept it in faith as only another marvel amid the great universe of marvels that surround us—as a truth in beautiful accordance with all the natural instincts and longings of our own souls. It augured, therefore, no small amount of faith in Martha, that, before the great fact of Christ's own resurrection, which has made the doctrine clearer and more credible to us, had taken place, she should have said, "I know that my brother shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day."

But, with this expression of unhesitating faith in the general resurrection, there mingles a feeling of

particular disappointment. She looked upon Christ's assertion that her brother would rise again as a repression of her ardent hopes, an extinguishing of any lingering expectation that Jesus might do some mighty work here and now for her brother. Such a postponement to the far-off ages of the future of her brother's restoration caused her heart to sink within her. Is this all that Jesus can do for her? Is this all the comfort that He can administer in her great sorrow? The Pharisees have said as much to her in their formal attempts at consolation; her own heart has whispered to her the same truth. But it is a saddening rather than an inspiring thought, that she must wait till the last day before she can clasp again a living brother. That hope is too distant to help her now; to fill the blank in her desolate home and her aching heart. To God a thousand years of that long interval might be as one day; but to her, who filled all futurity with the sadness of the present moment, one day of her present consuming grief was as a thousand years. We can discern a slight movement of impatience in Martha's reply to the words of Christ, as if she had said—I know all that well; it is a commonplace from which all glow has departed, and which has no power to soothe my sorrow; it does not even touch the present longings of my heart. I be-

lieve that one day there will be no more death ; but here and now death seems to be master in the house of life. I want my brother here and now ; my heart strains like to break now for the longing that it hath to see again his smiling face and hear again the music of his tender voice.

We, too, with Martha, talk and think of a resurrection at the last day, when our beloved ones are taken away from us ; and we feel that there is but cold comfort to our yearning hearts in the thought of the last day—that far-off bound and limit of all human liberty and endurance. It seems to remove to an almost infinite distance the reunion for which we crave—to make as dim as a star, that trembles out of sight on the verge of space, the old familiar fellowship of a complete and fruitful life with our loved and lost ones :—

“We catch up wild at parting saints,  
And feel Thy heaven too distant.”

We try, indeed, to comfort ourselves, and to fill up the vast void between us and that “divine far-off event,” by thoughts of the perfect blessedness of those who sleep in Jesus. But the intermediate state has no vital glow about it ; we regard it as only a provisional expectant state. “Not that we may be unclothed, but clothed upon,” said the apostle. We have

haunting visions of disembodied spirits cut off from the activities of the spirit world; and this feeling of the imperfection of their life till some far future day saddens our hearts, as we leave behind in the grave all that remains to us of their beloved presence. We know that they shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day; but that knowledge does us little present good:

“Ah, but who knows in what thin form and strange,  
Through what appalled perplexities of change,  
Wakes the sad soul, which, having once forgone  
This earth familiar and her friends thereon,  
In interstellar void becomes a chill  
Outlying fragment of the Master Will;  
So severed, so forgetting, shall not she  
Lament, immortal, immortality?”

But what did Christ say to this human despondency and half-hearted faith? What did He say to Martha's mournful words about the far-off resurrection? With Divine grace and condescension, overlooking the impatience of her reply, He says to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” He directs the glance of her faith upon His own person as its centre. In Himself exist the powers which she attributed only to another, and for which she supposed that He would have to ask God in prayer. In Him-



self, here and now, lie those triumphs over death and the grave which she relegated to the distant future—to the end of the world. In Himself are included the first and the last, things present and things future, the resurrection of the dead and the life of the living. He is the living link between the living and the dead. The dead are asleep in Him; the living have their true life hid in faith with Him; they are both rooted together in Him in the element of imperishableness. It is not a fact of the future, which faith may anticipate, to which Christ refers; but an accomplished fact—which is the priceless treasure—the unspeakable joy of believing lives now, and which the future will only complete. Jesus is as really, if not as richly, now and here, the Resurrection and the Life, as He will be in the heavenly world. Had the boon for which she craved been given to her—had Lazarus been restored from death to her arms—there would still have remained the constant distressing apprehension that he would soon be snatched from her again by the same foe. To be raised once to this world would be to die twice. And, therefore, as Olshausen beautifully says, He wishes to purify her longing from what was earthly and personal in it; to direct her thoughts from the departed brother to the present Saviour—the Saviour both for Lazarus and herself; and

to show to her that in Him alone she should obtain the perfect remedy against death, and find her brother in such a way that she should never more lose him.

The words which Christ uttered were solemn and awful words—the most awful and significant that were ever spoken by human lips. They proclaimed to the world the truth for which, for four thousand years, it had waited. They translated into a glorious reality the dreams and visions of those wise and gifted men, who with “open eyes” caught, while all was darkness around them, the faint dawn of that dayspring which was rising to irradiate the world. They stamp all human experience in this fleeting and changing world with immortality, and reveal a Divine endurance, in which our perishableness is centred, behind all the suffering and death which God sends for the discipline of mankind. They have been adopted as the most sublime and cheering words in the burial service of every Christian creed and people; and they have comforted millions of bereaved hearts since they were uttered, as they will comfort millions more to the end of the world. Christ’s words are large as the nature of Him who uttered them, and as the eternity which they imply. They contain no private blessing for a company of select expectants, but a public blessing to the broad human world. Jesus did not say to Martha

that He was going to make an exception of her case, and to do for her, on account of personal friendship, what He would do for no one else; for He came not into the world to show special favours, but to assert and manifest universal truth. He uttered a grand, wide, universal statement, not bounded to a certain moment in the future, but extending over the present and past; not confined to Lazarus, but embracing herself, and sister, and all the human family as well. He carried up the sublime declaration of His absolute existence made to Moses at the burning bush—"I am that I am"—into this even sublimer revelation made to Martha near the tomb of her brother, of His existence relative to us as the conqueror of the grave, and the Lord of Life triumphant over all death—"I am the resurrection and the life." And thus meeting all human necessities, embracing all human beings—not merely affecting the person then lying in the grave—they met Martha's sorrow more effectually than if they had been spoken directly as a special blessing to herself. Into their profound depths all the ages since have looked down without seeing the bottom. We catch but a fleeting glimpse of their meaning; we apprehend, even with all the light which Christ's own resurrection sheds upon them, but the surface explanation of them. And, therefore, we cannot

wonder that when Jesus said to Martha, "Believest thou this?" she should have turned from the truth to the speaker, and said, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"—a reply that seems irrelevant, and yet is the most complete and satisfactory she could have made. She did not understand the full meaning of what He said, but she believed in Himself. Oppressed with the mystery or dazzled with the glory which His word had revealed, she cast herself, as it were, upon His own bosom, and there found the perfect peace and comfort which His words could but dimly impart. She rose from the cold lifeless formula of the Pharisees' creed about the resurrection, to the confession of Christ Himself as the resurrection and the life, which no flesh and blood, no human traditions could have revealed to her. And surely it was an immense step upwards from vain fruitless regrets to this calm faith, that, as her Saviour was living, her brother was living still, because he had believed in Him.

And for us, too, the simple personal faith of Martha is enough. The doctrine of the resurrection, like the doctrine of the atonement, may be too high and mysterious for us. We may but very dimly and imperfectly comprehend the wondrous force and range of the truths of salvation; they are in every case

limited by our capacities, and bounded by our experience or our preconceived notions or belief; but, what is darkness to the intellect may be sunshine to the heart; and if we believe in Jesus Himself, it is easy to believe in all that He has declared for our hope and well-being in this world and the next. There is nothing which we cannot believe concerning Him, since we believe Him to be the Divine Saviour, in whom every great and gracious gift for this sin-ruined and death-haunted life is centred. Believing in His own death and resurrection, which have broken down the middle wall of partition between this world and the next, we believe in that which makes death to be not death, but a process of life and renovation—the transition from earth to heaven. And, while we see around us this joyful Easter Sabbath\* the beautiful signs of the quickened life of the earth, we instinctively feel that these outer tokens of revival and renovation point to deeper realities in the life of man; and we hail, in this spring gladness, the prophecy of a brighter spring that shall dawn upon the winter darkness of the grave, and make all the old things of the curse new. The natural death may still be left to inflict its miseries and spread its ravages. No more will Christ work a miracle of resurrection for the

\* Preached on the first Sabbath of April.

broken-hearted, to prove the reality of His words, as He once did for Martha and Mary. No more will women receive their dead raised to life again. The chariot of fire comes never more to lift any one from the slow pain of dying. But, if we believe in Jesus Himself, we shall share in the vision of Him in whom we believe; our nature will stretch to the grandeur of His; and we can see in His own light the profound and blessed truth that death is the only thing in death that dies; that the continuity of the life that is lived in Christ is never suspended, but is borne through the momentary darkness of death into the sphere of a vivid and fruitful human experience, where all is perfect forevermore. Want of faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, is the only death. "He that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

Very profound was the impression which Martha's interview with Jesus had produced upon her. It was not so much what He said, as the way in which He said it, that reached the deep hidden springs of her heart. His manner more than His words comforted and strengthened her. His words she imperfectly understood, but there was about His person such a sublime calmness of power, that she grew quiet and trustful in His presence, as ocean billows subside into tranquillity under the lee of a great rock. She did

not comprehend the full measure of the great truth to which He had given expression, but it was sufficient to awaken in her a feeling of comfort and hope, as the warm brooding of the spring sky, whose profound depths we cannot fathom, calls out into beautiful gladness the dormant life of the earth. In the natural world images of objects placed in contact with them are produced on polished surfaces in the *dark*, closely resembling those produced by the direct action of light. In like manner, through the very darkness of the high mysterious words of Christ, a distinct image of Him as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, was produced upon her heart, which sorrow had made unusually sensitive, and communion with Christ unusually receptive of heavenly impressions.

She asks no more questions. The climax of her faith has been reached. She has discerned in the familiar guest of other days, not merely as she had imagined, a great prophet risen amid the profound silence which had fallen for centuries over the spiritual life of her country, but the very Son of God Himself. And the faith that led to that sublime discovery was perfected by the confession of it. And here comes out one of the peculiarities of the Gospel of St. John. The idea of human witness, of human testimony to Christ, pervades it throughout. The Evangelist delights to

record the cries of confession wrung from the hearts of men, and to exhibit the growth of belief in individuals least susceptible to enthusiasm. It is very remarkable how, by a Divine artifice as it were, the highest testimony to the glory of God in the Incarnation is made to come from persons from whom we should not have expected to receive it. It is the impulsive, headstrong Peter who says, "We believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is the practical, matter-of-fact Martha who confesses, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world." It is to the sensual, free-living Samaritan woman that Christ reveals Himself as the Messiah, and from whom comes the admission to her neighbours, "Is not this the Christ?" It is the unscrupulous Pilate who owns, "I find no fault in him;" and from the melancholy, doubting Thomas comes the highest testimony of human faith and love, "My Lord and my God." Wonderful music, drawn from the heart of man by "the hand of faith running up the scales," from its faintest and lowest notes, sounded during the stolen interview of Nicodemus at night, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God," to its grandest and richest harmony, "My Lord and my God," in which the Gospel of St. John culminates; the be-



ginning and the ending of it meeting in the acknowledgment of Christ's Divine glory as the Redeemer of the world.

After the expression of her faith and love, Martha hastens to seek her sister, to make her a partaker of her new-found joy. She does so secretly, remembering, in her loving anxiety, the peril which had recently threatened Christ in Jerusalem at the hands of the very persons who were now assembled in her house. The Lord summons Mary by her sister's lips. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," were the words with which Martha greeted her sister in the retirement of her home. It is not difficult to understand the reason of this message. Jesus could have wrought the miracle of restoration without the presence of Mary, and upon the strength of Martha's confession of faith. He could have given to her the bewildering joy of the final result, but He wished her to be the witness of all the stages of the wonderful process, that thus her confidence in Himself might be strengthened and her love ennobled. Her faith, indeed, was an essential element in the performance of the miracle. Being more simple and receptive than that of Martha, it fulfilled more perfectly the condition required for working a miracle. With her own presence on the scene was also connected, as a link, the presence of

others who were required as witnesses. The message was secretly given, and immediately obeyed; but, in the providence of God, it was not unobserved. The Jews saw her hasty departure from the house; they marked the direction in which she went; and they came to the conclusion that she had gone to the grave to weep there. Martha's disappearance seems to have excited no remark from those who had come to condole with the sisters. They probably fancied that, in accordance with her active habits, she had gone out to perform some of her domestic duties. But, when the still and thoughtful Mary rose up to go out, they felt constrained to follow her, lest the sight of her brother's grave should prove overpowering to her; and, on this errand of compassion, they became unintentional witnesses of all the circumstances of the glorious miracle, and some of them, perhaps, wilful actors in the dark tragedy to which it immediately led. The movements of all the parties concerned were free and natural, and seemed to have no more of deep design in them than the shape of the tangled knots of sea-weed flung by the spring-tide upon the beach; and yet they were all overruled by Divine wisdom for the accomplishment of His great and gracious purposes.

During the first days of mourning for the dead, it

has always been the custom among Oriental nations to repair frequently to the graves of their loved ones. The Jewish women especially were zealous in the performance of this sacred and affecting duty. They realized their loss more vividly beside the last resting-place of their friends ; they could there give fuller and more unrestrained vent to their grief. A veiled figure bent down with sorrow, and uttering low sobs which shake all her frame, is a common sight at the present day in an eastern place of interment. It is also a frequent spectacle in our own church-yards. The custom is indeed universal ; it springs from a touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. Every one loves to visit the grave of a departed friend. We feel nearer those whom we have lost in such a place than anywhere else. Their last relics are beneath our feet ; the green grass and the bright flowers and shrubs that grow over or beside the grave, draw down the sunshine and the dew of heaven to their dark resting-place, and link them with the light and beauty of the living world ; and we feel as if in the air around were diffused a mystic sense of their presence. The grave of our beloved seems the trysting-place between the souls of the living and the spirits of the just made perfect ; the boundary line between the seen and the unseen world. To that mountain summit of a new

world, which rises on the farthest horizon of this, come our cherished visitants from the celestial world to talk with us of their decease, and to show to us their transfiguration of blessedness ; and, in the dark cloud of sorrow that shuts us in with them, we become sharers in their glorious change. So long as we have the last home of our dear ones near us, we feel that all the links that bind our familiar life with theirs are not broken. It adds much to the sorrow of death when we know not where our dead are laid ; and hence our anxiety to recover the bodies of those who have met their fate by some accident by sea or land. The ocean is a mighty sepulchre, and each tumultuous billow shapes a grave and sings a requiem over some sleeper below. But there is no home for the affections in the unresting deep. We cannot fix the place where our friend reposes, or go there to weep and sadly muse upon the days that are no more, and find soothing comfort in the very realization and outpouring of our sorrow. It is on the calm bosom of our mother earth that we love best to lie and take the last long sleep, with the singing of the birds and the blossoming of the flowers above us, and all around those sweet symbols of the resurrection which cheer the darkness of the grave, and inspire our hopes of eternal life. The cemetery in the outskirts of the busy city, the church-

yard around the lowly village church, the lonely God's-acre among the hills, are places where the sweet breath of heaven soothes our hearts, and glimpses come to us from other skies. Blessed are we if, when we go there to weep, the Lord of Life Himself meets us, as He met Mary at the sepulchre, and speaks comfortably to our souls! Blessed are we if, when we go there to behold the grave of another, we can contract our mind to the small estate that awaits ourselves beside it, and give our souls to nobler thoughts and cares than those which usually possess us; for in such a case we shall feel the immortal fragrance that comes from the grave where the Rose of Sharon reposed, and plant a garden around the sepulchre, where everlasting flowers shall smell sweet and blossom from the dust!

Jesus had not moved from the place where He had His interview with Martha. When Mary, on wings of love, reached the spot, and saw the dear familiar form and face, a thousand tender memories rushed upon her heart; the flood-gates of emotion were burst open; and, dissolved in a passion of tears, she fell down at His feet, saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." How entirely characteristic was her action and emotion! How different from the upright attitude and calm self-control which Martha had exhibited in the presence of Jesus! It is

at the feet of the Master that we see her when she is first introduced to us. There she loved to sit and look up to that holy upturned face which reflected all heaven, and listen to that tender voice which expressed all love; while her questioning heart was enlarged with wide views of the fields of truth, and the vague wistfulness of her soul found a centre of repose in the sense of His goodness. His greatness flowed around her incompleteness, and His rest around her restlessness, as the horizon rounds the ruggedness and brokenness of the earth, and the tumultuous billows of the ocean, into perfect fulness and peace. Jesus manifested Himself to the family of Bethany in another way than He did unto the world. In His dealings with them He appeared in a different aspect from that which He assumed in His intercourse with His disciples, or even with His own mother, and brothers, and sisters. In their case His own saying was fulfilled, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." He called them not servants, but friends. His love for them raised them into a kind of equality with Himself. With all others His intercourse was more or less formal and official. He was the Master and Teacher to His disciples; and their relation to Him, while based upon the warmest affection, was nevertheless

characterised by that profound respect which a superior inspires in the heart of an inferior. From His own family circle, unbelief on their part, and low carnal ideas of His person and mission, divided Him, notwithstanding that He fulfilled most perfectly all domestic duties, and felt for His blood relations all that the purest natural affection could require. In general society He had ever to act the part of a public man, or prophet—to measure, as it were, His words, to guard Himself against misconstruction, to speak and act for a purpose—and thus a degree of restraint was put upon Him. But in the household of Bethany we see Him in all the natural freedom and abandonment, so to speak, of home-life. His whole nature is unbent; the dazzling light of His super-human power and holiness is veiled and softened by the tenderness of His human love. Though still the spiritual guide and teacher, He is yet more the brother of Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. To them He exhales the inmost fragrance of His heart of hearts; and in their company we are more closely drawn to Him than anywhere else as our own born brother, even while the impression that He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners is deepened and strengthened. Throughout the whole beautiful chapter which records so fully and circum-

stantially all the incidents and sayings connected with the restoration of Lazarus, the impression of this tender and endearing blood-relationship grows upon us; and it is doubtless in order to produce that impression—which is not conveyed to the same extent by any other part of the Gospel history—that all these minute homely details are given by the Evangelist; and we bless God that it has pleased Him to reveal to us, by the inspired writer, so fully this new and most engaging aspect of Christ's character and life.

But still, notwithstanding the free and informal human intercourse that existed between the household of Bethany and Jesus, we see from Mary's conduct and attitude, on all the occasions on which she is brought before us, that a holy awe, a deep reverence mingled with and chastened the love which she bore to Him. Never did she lose for a moment the consciousness of His immeasurable superiority. She called Him Lord, and sat at His feet; and, even while expressing her regret at His long and unaccountable absence, no words of upbraiding fell from her lips; no unworthy thought of His conduct passed through her mind; she felt that some higher reason than she could divine had actuated Him; and the very language that conveyed her innocent accusation acknowledged His holy goodness and Divine power. And was it not



so also with the disciple who was most like Mary in disposition—the disciple whom Jesus loved? He lay on His bosom at the Holy Supper in the upper chamber; and yet years of familiarity did not abate the deep reverential awe with which he regarded Jesus. When He appeared to him in His risen glory in the Isle of Patmos, he fell down at His feet like one dead, and he needed to hear the old reassuring words of earth, “Fear not,” before his emotion of awe could subside. And surely in this holy reverence which His most intimate friends cherished towards Him in hours of closest friendship and most familiar intercourse, that would have discoloured anything that was not heavenly and dwarfed anything that was not Divine, we have the strongest and most satisfactory of all proofs of Jesus’ immaculate holiness. One light word, one selfish action, one questionable look, would have reduced Him to the level of other men. With mortals like us, familiarity discovers blemishes and leads to depreciation. No dignity will assert itself long against a certain degree of close intimacy. But those who were most familiar with Jesus cherished the loftiest ideas of His dignity; and she who knew Him best, and whom, perhaps, after His mother, He loved the most, felt that prone at His sacred feet was the only attitude that she could assume.

Mary threw herself at the feet of Jesus in her hour of sorrow; but she could not have done so with such confidence had she not sat at His feet in the hour of joy. And how true it is that if we do not bask in the sunshine of His face when all goes well with us, we cannot put our trust under the shadow of His wings when trial comes upon us! No human being likes another to come to him only when he requires help. If a man's own brother recognised the relationship only when some pecuniary embarrassment or some sore trial requiring the help of another overtook him, the tenderest and most considerate heart would be repelled by such selfishness. And can we imagine that He who gave us these instincts of our nature, is so altogether different that He can bear to be treated with neglect when we have all that heart can wish, and approached with supplications and tears when we are prostrated by trouble. Alas! that this should be so frequent—that religion should be so almost exclusively associated with the darker and sadder experiences of life—that the picture drawn by Him who knew what was in man, in the parable of the supper, should be so true to the life! The individuals who began with one consent to make excuse were those who were satisfied with their position in the world—the man who had wealth to purchase, or strength for

active exercise, or who was living joyfully with the wife of his youth; while those who had nothing else to enjoy, and nowhere else to turn to, filled their places—the poor, the halt, the maimed, the blind. But although, in the season of prosperity, we have been acting towards a God of love in a manner that, if treated so ourselves, we should call the basest ingratitude, yet He does not laugh at our calamity or mock when our fear cometh. He makes His goodness to pass before us in our darkest hours as well as in our brightest. He lifts us up with a tender hand when we cast ourselves at His feet, and pours the balm of His consolation into our rankling wounds, and remembers not against us our former indifference towards Him. But, although He does not retaliate, and returns good for evil, we make ourselves incalculable losers in the hour of sorrow by our neglect of God in the hour of joy. It is not reasonable to expect, and according to the laws of our spiritual nature we cannot receive, the same comfort from Him in our sorrow which is enjoyed by those who seek His face always, when fortune smiles as well as when it frowns,—who can joy in God when the cup of earthly blessings is full as when it is empty. We have not the same feeling of confidence and ease in His presence; we have not the same assurance of help.

We have made Him a stranger to us, and ourselves strangers to Him; and therefore we find it hard to love Him of whom we know so little, to trust Him with whom we have so little in common. To have a sense of His love *towards* us, we must have His love *in* us. All this surely deepens the conviction which worldly wisdom itself might teach us, that they who sit at the feet of Jesus in the time of prosperity, will instinctively cast themselves there in the time of sore necessity, knowing Him whom they have believed as a tried and trusted friend, and assured—

“That He by whom our bright hours shone,  
Our darkness best may rule.”

It is one of the finest traits of a narrative full of exquisite touches of human nature, that Mary should have repeated the very words with which Martha had greeted Jesus, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” This striking unison of feeling between sisters, whose characters were so widely different, shows how the fire of a common sorrow had welded together their nature. The reason of the coincidence is evident on the surface. For four days Martha and Mary had sat together in their darkened home, and as they talked of their departed brother, the thought uppermost in their minds, and

which oftenest found expression from their lips, was that the result might have been different had their Divine Friend been with them. They brooded upon this idea until it took exclusive possession of them, and "the dirges of their hope one melancholy burden bore." And what a beautiful illustration it is of the harmonizing effect upon differently constituted persons of a common sorrow! Natures the most opposite in their tastes and sympathies grow into each other's likeness under the discipline of what they feel deeply together. 'One of the most remarkable effects of intense grief is that it brings back to us the simplicity of childhood,' levels all barriers and distinctions of position and temperament and education; and we are drawn to one another, not by the cords of particular sympathies only, but by the cords of the race. We return from the conventionalities of our ordinary life to the simple sorrow that belongs to the heart of a child. Nature conquers all our haughty reserve, our customary etiquette; and our isolation from one another is lost in the longing for sympathy. We become children again, and the childlike depth of our sorrow brings out not only the childlike depth of our trust in our Heavenly Father, but also the childlike leaning of our hearts upon our brothers and sisters who are distressed with a similar woe. The mutual

sorrow that had come upon the two sisters of Bethany, those four days during which they kept together the mournful vigil of death, made both better than either had been before; Martha more like Mary, and Mary a little more like Martha.

Deeply as Jesus sympathised with Martha in her sorrow, her calmness of demeanour, and her ability to enter at once into conversation with Him, did not stir the keen sensibilities of His nature. He talked with her tenderly and sadly, but yet composedly. The friends who had come to condole with her were equally calm and self-possessed. There was nothing demonstrative in her grief to call forth a corresponding feeling in their mind. Her calmness made them calm. But Mary's profound sorrow touched their pity to the very quick. When she cast herself at the feet of Jesus in a paroxysm of grief, and the wounds of her sorrow opened afresh at the first meeting with One who knew and loved her brother, and who the last time she saw Him witnessed some happy scene in which that brother took part, and she could only utter the one sentence which for four days had been the pathetic refrain of the sisters' woe, Jesus was deeply affected. The sight of Mary's overwhelming sorrow, and the responsive tears which it called forth from the friends standing around, stirred to the very depths the

sympathies of the Man of Sorrows. He conversed with Martha, but He wept with Mary. To the one He gave words of comfort, to the other He gave tears, a part of Himself, the deepest emotions of His heart.

The words, "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," in which the Evangelist describes this emotion, have occasioned much perplexity to commentators from the earliest times, inasmuch as in the original they convey the idea of a complex feeling, not only of grief, but also of anger, and mean properly speaking an indignant sorrow. But the question arises, "What could Jesus have been angry at?" Some of the early fathers of the Church have said that He was ashamed of His own emotion, and His Divine nature chided the weakness of His human; others have declared that He was indignant at the unbelief of the Jews, and even of the sisters; while Strauss and his school maintain that this expression of indignation is entirely in keeping with His character as John delineates Him, easily roused as a miracle-worker, and ready to fly into a passion upon any sign of a refusal to believe. The first supposition is manifestly inapplicable, because it is founded upon stoical principles, with whose frigid inanimateness Christianity has nothing in common. Jesus was a true man, and His perfect humanity was always shown in

His warm and lively sympathy with the griefs of others. The supposition of Strauss is altogether unworthy of consideration, for it proceeds from a most perverse and determined misunderstanding of the whole character of Christ. The ancient Jewish enemies of Jesus, who sought every pretext to kill Him, made no such misinterpretation; that was left for His modern enemies, who not only destroy but calumniate. A moment's sober reflection, one would think, ought to be enough to show the reason of His indignant sorrow on this occasion. Jesus traced effects to their causes. A single case of bereavement was to Him but a specimen of the whole vast range and extent of human sorrow. The grief of Mary was the same in kind as the grief of any sister who has lost a brother since the fall of man. The object of His tearful anger was not so much the single instance of Lazarus' death, and the privation and mourning which it occasioned in one family and circle of friends, but the whole vast history of death and its sufferings as the result of sin. It was not indeed the personal sin of any member of the family of Bethany that had brought all this suffering upon them. The connection between suffering and sin in individual cases cannot always be traced; but we know that even in those trials which are common to the race, sickness, death, and bereave-



ment, suffering is the fruit of sin. When a bridge has been swept away by a flood, as some one has said, we do not, when contemplating its ruins, pause to inquire by what exact particles of water the damage was caused. It was the whole stream that did it; the action of each particle of water on the next communicating itself in turn to those next in order. And so the calamity that had overtaken the family of Bethany was caused by the stream of sin; and it was against the whole current of sin and the author of it, the great adversary of our race, that Jesus was moved with a sorrowful indignation.

He groaned, not in His emotional nature merely, but in His spirit, in His higher nature, in that part of His being which looked before and after. He was sorrowfully indignant because of that great evil which had blighted the beauty and blasted the blessedness of a world which He had made very good. He was indignantly sorrowful because of the usurped dominion of death over the children of men. With the anguish-stricken form of Mary at His feet, He saw unrolled before Him the whole long scroll of the past history of this sinful and suffering race, written within and without with lamentation and mourning and woe. He saw all the wretchedness which in great masses of the people seemed to mock the healing powers

of human love and Divine grace, all the tragedies of the human soul played out without any record in the commonest lives, all the gigantic forms of tyranny and cruelty brooding for ages on the earth, all the measureless woes which have hurried countless myriads to a dark and dishonoured grave. And He knew that all these sufferings, unlike the ravages of the volcano, the earthquake, or the storm, were also sins, crimes and wrongs which made those who inflicted them more miserable than those who endured them. Philanthropists have not seldom felt the burden of human misery greater than they could bear. The apostle Paul said that he and his fellow-christians who had the first fruits of the Spirit, groaned within themselves on account of the travailing together in pain of the whole creation, with a keener and intenser anguish than others felt because of their greater measure of discernment of the evil. And even in the minds of the more thoughtful of our modern sceptics, the sense of misery and impotence in human life has overpowered the complacent optimism of worldly carelessness, or of shallower philosophies. What, then, must have been the effect produced by the thought of all this wrong and wretchedness in the mind of the Redeemer, with all the reproach which it seemed to cast upon Divine Providence. No wonder that He should be, not only

sorrowful, but indignant at the contemplation; that He should have a feeling of bitterness, even though He came to lighten the curse and remove the evil, that His work should have been at all necessary. In the groaning of Jesus, on this occasion, we have a glimpse given to us of the sorrowful displeasure with which the Eternal God has ever regarded man's sin; we have a revelation of the pressure upon the heart of God of that burden of evil and suffering under which the whole creation groans, even when it knows no more why it suffers than one who tosses uneasily in a fevered sleep. The Bible tells us that ever and anon God repented Him that He had made the world, for the scenes that took place in it were too miserable and wicked for Him to look upon. We see but a few passing glimpses, at rare intervals, of the wretchedness of the world, and catch but a few faint notes now and then of the great wailing coronach of pain and despair which goes up day by day into the ear of Heaven. But if we could set before our mind's eye all that we have seen of sin and sickness and death and misery, and multiply it a myriad fold, and realise that this lies constantly bare before the holy eye of God, we should have some idea what a world it is which a loving and righteous God sustains; we should understand why Jesus, who gave audible expression

and visible form to the Father's feelings, should groan in spirit and be troubled. In the individual sorrow of Mary He felt the whole burden of human sin and woe; that burden which caused Him to sweat, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as it were great drops of blood, and which on the cross brought that horror of great darkness under which He sank out of life.

The inquiry of Jesus, "Where have ye laid him?" and the offer of the Jews to lead Him to the spot, need not perplex us. Were it necessary, we should not fear to admit that Jesus, as man, did not know where Lazarus was interred. There was, and still is, a tendency in Christian theology to deny all that is essential in the humanity of Christ in particular instances, while admitting theoretically the general fact. To speak of Christ's ignorance and development would be considered inconsistent with the honour due to Him. Such a tendency denies the very deepest thing in Christianity, which is to humanize Divinity in the person of Jesus,—that, by means of a nature like our own, God may bring Himself within our range. We lose the real by clinging to the ideal. In our proper endeavour to exalt Him as God, we lift Him to an altitude so far above ourselves, so much higher than all visible points, that He becomes a dim abstraction with which we have no sympathy, and which exercises

no true power over us. Jesus assumed our nature under all the limitations imposed upon humanity ; and one of these limitations was, that He should acquire His knowledge, as we do, by observation and inference—by the cultivation and exercise of His faculties. He was no prodigy, no superhuman person. He had to be told things, and to find out things, like any of ourselves. What He knew as God, He had to acquire as man by the slow painful processes of human education. He could not otherwise have known all the things of a man, or been able to sympathise with them. And, therefore, with a fearless truthfulness, Scripture tells us that “He increased in wisdom,” that “He waxed strong in spirit,” that “He learned obedience,” that “He was made perfect through suffering;” leaving the mystery and seeming contradiction untouched. The combination of human ignorance and superhuman knowledge, which we see apparently in the working of the miracle upon Lazarus, would be in entire harmony with the union of human weakness and Divine power which is so noticeable in all Christ’s miracles, and in His own person as Son of Man and Son of God—in His whole life as our human brother, and yet our Divine Redeemer. It was He who thirsted by the well of Sychar who offered to give the woman of Samaria living water ; it was He who

fell asleep in the boat who rebuked the raging winds and waves. And therefore we should not stumble at the recorded fact, that He who said, "I am the resurrection and the life," should nevertheless ask the mourners to show Him the place where His dead friend was laid. But we are not under the necessity of entering upon this wide and profound subject of the limitations of Christ's human nature in the present instance. The question which Jesus asked of the Jews might well have been of a similar kind to that which He asked Philip before the miracle of the loaves and fishes, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat"—not needing any advice, or being Himself in any real embarrassment, but simply to test the faith of the disciple. The asking of the question, and the guiding of Jesus to the spot by the Jews, did not necessarily imply ignorance on His part. It was one of the essential circumstances of the miracle. It insured the attendance of the Jews at the grave as witnesses, while the procedure might be intended to work in their minds—to suggest thoughts of the object of this visit to the sepulchre—and thus to prepare them for the wonder which He was about to perform.

And now we come to the shortest and most wonderful verse in the whole Bible—"Jesus wept." I am strongly tempted to do nothing more than repeat

the words ; for I feel that to comment upon them is to gild the sunshine and paint the lily. All words of explanation are poor and tame beside that all-comprehensive saying. The Evangelist himself can add nothing to them. He leaves them by themselves in all their beauty and simplicity, like the small seeds of some very lovely and fragrant flower, to grow in every human heart, and there disclose, according to individual capacities and wants, all their germinating fulness. Small as a grain of mustard seed the verse is ; but it has the whole kingdom of heaven within it. It is the Christian religion alone that reveals to us a God of tears. The conception is utterly beyond all the other religions of mankind, that love to dwell upon the power and grandeur of their divinities, but attribute to them none of the meek graces and passive virtues of humanity. The gods of the East were stern fates, or placid deities, sunk in immortal repose behind the deep blue oriental sky ; while the gods of Olympus, of Greek and Roman mythology, were ever pictured by the poets as beings free from all sorrow, leading joyful or tranquil lives unrippled by any care, coming down to our woe-stricken world as visitors only, bent upon selfish amusement or agreeable adventure, undertaking, but only in sport, our human tasks, and altogether untouched by the sight of our tears,

and untroubled by the burden of our woe. No human imagination, indeed, could reach to such a sublime ideal as that of a weeping God—a God stooping, suffering, and dying. Such a conception is to the human mind logically impossible; our laws of thinking are totally at fault in regard to such a thought viewed as a speculation. And this of itself is proof sufficient that the Evangelist described a real Divine person, and not a feigned or fabricated one. Had the narrative been invented by human ingenuity, it would not, we may be sure, have contained this sentence, “Jesus wept.” The imaginary Christ, as it has been well said, would have walked majestically up the slope of the Mount of Olives, and, standing in the midst of an admiring crowd, with a halo of the sunset round His brow, have commanded the dead man to rise. Even the beloved disciple, with all his tenderness and spiritual insight, could not have invented the real Christ—the weary and way-worn man, His garments soiled and stained with the dust of travel, who lifted up His eyes to heaven beside the grave of His friend, and wept there tears as salt and bitter as any that ever fell from human eyes.

“Jesus wept.” The dead are raised to life by no callous philosopher with a hard eye and unfeeling heart—by no mighty prophet, who stands on a lofty



pedestal above the woe he seeks to relieve, and there utters his oracular voice ; by no magician, who simply waves his wand and accomplishes, with no cost or effort to himself, the mighty miracle ; by no God, who stands afar off in the heavens, and issues His commandment to the dead to rise, as He issued His commandment to light to appear at the creation ; no, but by One who is very man, with the tender weakness that is more moving and majestic than all our strength, and the sorrowful experiences that are more beautiful and precious than all our gladness. Jesus came down to the level of the sorrow. He identified Himself with it. He made it His own. By bearing it He triumphed over it. Not by any exercise of arbitrary will costing Him nothing did He recall the vanished life of His buried friend. On the contrary, it seems as if the greatness of the miracle required a correspondingly great expenditure of sorrow and self-conflict. Three times was He deeply moved. "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," "He wept," "Jesus, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave." Himself bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows. In the sorrow, in the sweat of His soul, He wrought the miracles which are significantly called "works." He bruised the serpent's head through the wounding of His own heel.

“Jesus wept.” We are accustomed to think of Christ’s sorrows as only vicarious; but, though He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, His was no mere rehearsal of sorrow. His sorrows were His own as fully as our sorrows are ours. We say that there are two sad human experiences which the Man of Sorrows did not know—the sorrow caused by personal sin, and the sorrow caused by personal bereavement. Sinless, He could have had no remorse; a homeless man, He had no home to be despoiled by death. And yet, on the two occasions on which He is said to have wept, His tears were caused by the sins and miseries of the doomed city of Jerusalem, and by the anguish of a household which death had made desolate, and He felt these as if they were His own.

“Jesus wept.” To many minds this sorrow of Jesus is incomprehensible. Some commentators stumble at it. Why weep, when the next moment life is to be restored to the dead? Jesus certainly knew that He was about immediately to restore Lazarus; and, indeed, He had said, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye might believe.” But this apparent difficulty only gives us a deeper glimpse of the perfect humanity of Jesus. He looked at the matter not from His own, but from Martha’s

and Mary's point of view. He knew what He was about to do; but they did not know, and therefore His feelings were touched by the sight of their suffering. He wept in sympathy with them, although He was about to change their sorrow into joy; He sorrowed with them for the very sorrow which His presence might have prevented. Who could shed tears in such circumstances but Christ? Would the physician who knew that he had the power of giving immediate relief be affected by the tears of a family drowned in grief? Had a mere man been gifted by God with the power to raise the dead, he would be so eager to exhibit that marvellous power, and thereby to still the mourners' woe, that he would be unable to weep whilst on the way to the grave. But Jesus was more than man; and therefore, as the greater comprehends the less, so He fulfilled the perfect ideal of man. And is not this scene at Bethany a picture of what He who is the same yesterday to-day and for ever is still? Although He has entered into His glory, and is seated on the throne of the universe, He weeps with us when we weep; sympathises with us in our sorrow, while He waits to be gracious, waits to bring light out of our darkness, and change our sorrow into everlasting joy.

“Jesus wept.” When He saw Mary weeping, and

the Jews also weeping, He wept. We do not usually speak of the imagination of Jesus. And yet it was this faculty that enabled Him to realise so vividly the sorrow of others, on this occasion, as to stir up the deepest feelings of His own breast. One writer has classed the imagination among the moral qualities, and as one of the most valuable of them. And certainly some of the noblest actions are due to the possession of this faculty, and some of the basest and most hateful characteristics of humanity are caused by the absence of it. If we could put ourselves in the place of others, and imagine what they think and how they feel, there would be far less cruelty, selfishness, bigotry, hardness, and pretentiousness in the world. The tortures of the Inquisition could never have been invented by a human being who had the least spark of imagination; and many of the petty selfishnesses and cruelties of common life would never have been indulged or inflicted were men and women able to form any idea of what it is that they make their victims suffer. How reassuring, then, is the thought that there is something in God that answers to our own imagination, and by means of which He can put Himself in our place; for we have in this recognition the certainty that He cannot deal otherwise than fairly with us. He whose imagination on earth en-

abled Him to realise the sorrow of the family of Bethany, knows now, on the throne of heaven, what we feel and need, and has the truest sympathy with our state, and will in the end judge us equitably.

“Jesus wept.” There is no human power that can so deeply touch the soul of a sinner as the sorrow which his sin has brought upon a loved and loving heart. The tears of Jesus have touched many whom His terrors could not have moved. We have seen God in the fire and smoke, and heard His voice in the thunders of Sinai; we have felt His judgments and trembled under His power; but we have stiffened ourselves against all the wondrous displays and activities of His omnipotent rule. But when we see Him weeping, we are melted at once. When we look upon the tears of Jesus, caused by our sin, and behold in them the patience and tenderness of His love, our hearts are carried captive; we relent and become as pliable as little children. We understand through those sacred tears that, whatever sin may cost the sinner, it costs far more to the Saviour. We recognise in them the manifestation of a Divine love to the prodigal and the guilty which cannot be satisfied, even amid the glory of heaven, while one lost soul is wandering sadly in the wilderness; of a sympathy with even the sinful woes of humanity which cannot sub-

side into the calm of the eternal joy, until His hand has wiped away all tears from weeping eyes. The grace that is in these tears of Christ is the conqueror of sin ; it triumphs where the law fails.

“Jesus wept.” Twice, I have said, it is recorded that Jesus wept. He wept in sympathy with the sisters of Bethany. A few days afterwards He wept in pity over the city of Jerusalem. The Greek words employed to signify these two weepings are not the same. The weeping of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus is expressed by a word in the original which means a silent flow of tears. It was a soothing sorrow that He felt, for it was well with His friend ; and it was well with his living sisters who were weeping around. Infinite love mingled its tears with those of Martha and Mary, and the light of heaven illumined their darkness and cheered their sadness. It is a blessed thought to us that “Jesus wept,” when we too have not to sorrow as those who have no hope ; there is no gloom in such a case in the desolation ; there is no bitterness in the tears. The grief of Jesus is left on record to comfort our grief. His sorrow pities our sorrow ; our wounded hearts are healed by the touch of His wounded heart ; and His inspiring words about resurrection and life shine with greater beauty and brightness in the darkness of death, because

they are jewelled with the tears of His tender pity. But the weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem is expressed by a word that signifies loud lamentation. His tears were bitter and burning, for Jerusalem was resisting the Divine love and despising the heavenly grace that had come to her. An infinitude of yearning pity overmastered Him, and He not only wept, but burst into a passion of lamentation, in which the choked voice seemed to struggle for utterance. We can hear the very sound of tears in His words, broken as they are by emotion, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." And the solemn lesson which the weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem, while it was yet fair and flourishing and unconscious of its doom, teaches us, is that we may paralyse our own power of turning to Christ even while He is waiting to be gracious, and all the possibilities of salvation may be over before death comes; that "on the dead soul in the living body the gates of the eternal tomb may have closed, never more to be opened." Over the grave of a soul that is unmelted by all the touching proofs of His Divine love, and dead to all the unspeakable tendernesses of His cross, Jesus pours out tears of unutterable sadness; and the misery to which in such a case we doom ourselves,

presses as a sorer burden upon His heart, than all the sufferings and sorrows which He endured for us in His expiatory life and death.

The sight of Jesus' tears produced a deep impression upon the bystanders. It led them to form a more favourable opinion of Him than they had hitherto entertained. Sorrow for their mutual friend reconciled them to Him for a moment; and they lost sight of their animosity in the indulgence of a common sympathy—"Behold how He loved him." Tears are not, however, always the sign of a devoted attachment. There are narrow and shallow natures, as I have already said, that can be easily made to weep; while wide and profound natures may give little outward evidence of an agony that is rending their very heart-strings and changing the complexion of their whole life. Throw a pebble into a brooklet, and you violently agitate the whole mass of water from side to side; while a stone cast into a broad deep river creates on the calm surface only a few ripples as it sinks to the depths. There is often a hard, selfish and stubborn heart beneath the temperament whose sensibilities are quickly moved by every breeze of circumstance. Experience of life has too often proved that noisy, demonstrative sorrow, like the loud-falling rain, runs off the soul very quickly; while



quiet, unobtrusive grief accumulates and remains, like the silent falling of snow-flakes, until all warm colours and bright forms of joy are blotted out by the uniform drift, and all life lies under a dreary white shroud of death. In the case of Jesus, however, the judgment of the Jews was correct. His tears were a true indication of the depth and extent of His love. His nature was calm and deep, moving with a profound heavenly peace in the midst of the most agitating circumstances—as the earth revolves stedfastly on its axis while storms are raging on its surface. He did not usually betray the emotions that filled Him; and it is a proof of the powerful nature of His emotions, on this occasion, that He should have given them outward expression. But the Evangelist, while recording the exceptional incident, is at the same time careful to use a phrase in the original which implies, not that Jesus “was troubled,” but that He *troubled Himself*. He was not played upon passively by the emotions of others, like the surface of a lake that is agitated by the uncertain wind: a volcanic fire within stirred the very depths of His nature.

The highest proof which the Jews possessed of the love of Jesus to Lazarus, was the expression of His sorrow. But we have far higher proof of His love to us. He gave His tears for Lazarus; He gave His life for

us! "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"—not only for my benefit, but in my place, as my surety and substitute—may every believer say with the Apostle Paul. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." But the love of Jesus is more than human; for He laid down His life for us, not while we were friends, but while we were aliens and enemies—"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Sinless One took the place of the sinful. The Eternal Creator gave Himself for the guilty perishing creature. Blessed be God, not the tears shed at the grave of a friend, but the long history of His suffering life and of His atoning death of shame and pain, is the measure of the love of Christ to us. The Cross, on which He consummated the sacrifice of Himself, is the symbol and the throne of His conquering love. Taking my place beside that Cross, and gazing upon the buffeted face and the thorn-crowned brow, and the nailed hands and feet, and the agonising thirst, and the horror of great darkness, and the mournful eyes closing in death—I can say, "Behold how He loved me!" And are tears from me, caused by the contemplation of that dying love, sufficient to show my love to Him? Is it enough that my sympathies should be excited, and I should weep over the pathos of this devotion, or

even adore and magnify the sufferer? No; for all that may be merely a sentimental sorrow, an outburst of natural feeling, which a touching and well-told fictitious story could have produced in an equal or even stronger degree, leaving the depths of the heart utterly unaffected. It is not enough even to bewail the sins that caused all His sufferings; I must give practical and conclusive evidence of the sincerity of my feelings by keeping His commandments, and leading a life of devotion to His service. His giving Himself for me is the proof of His love; and my giving myself for Him is the proof of my love. His love reproduces itself in me only when I live no more unto myself, but unto Him that died for me and rose again. Let me seek, therefore, to live so holy and devoted a life by the strength of His death, and in imitation of His example, as that even the enemies of religion may be constrained to say of me, "Behold how he loved Him."

But the sight of Christ's tears did not produce the same impression upon all the spectators. There were some among them who questioned the extent of His love—seeing that He calmly permitted the light of life to fade out of the home of His friends. "Could not this man," they said, "who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not

have died?" He weeps over the calamity, now; it would have been better far had He prevented it altogether. They had heard of the wonderful cure which, a short time before, had been wrought upon a man who was born blind. It had been judicially investigated by the authorities; it had made a great noise in Jerusalem. Perhaps some of themselves had known the man, or witnessed the cure, or taken part in his examination and expulsion from the synagogue. The genuineness of the marvel could not, therefore, be doubted. This man, beyond all question or cavil, did possess very extraordinary powers. Why, then, did He not exert those powers to save His friend? It was not, surely, more difficult to heal a fever than to cure a congenital blindness. This admission is remarkable, not only because it is the testimony of Christ's enemies to His miraculous gifts, but also because of the contradictions which it involves. Those who made it do not seem to have heard of the other restorations of Jesus in far Galilee, or, at least, to have realised them so vividly as the cure of blindness in their own neighbourhood. And, therefore, the idea seems never to have occurred to them that He who could cure radical blindness could raise the dead—that He who could have prevented death could have conquered death. But, further—if, as they be-

lieved, Jesus won His power of doing miracles from Heaven on account of His surpassing goodness, then they might have been sure that that very goodness would not have allowed Him to act inconsistently with it in the case of His friend—that nothing would have prevented Him from exercising His power had it been at all possible. But these contradictions did not strike them any more than did the contradiction in what they said regarding the blind man strike His disciples—“Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” They are characteristic and significant. They are involved in all similar accusations of the Divine procedure. They are based upon the grand primary fact of the permission of evil. Could not the Lord have prevented the fall of man and all its consequences? we ask; forgetting that human freedom stood in the way of compulsory sinlessness, and that God could not forcibly oppose the free-will which He had bestowed as an inalienable gift upon man—without contradicting Himself. The question which the Jews put is one which often occurs to us, though we may not give it expression, when we are perplexed by the mysteries of God’s providence, and our feet well-nigh slip. We see the head of a family suddenly cut down in the pride of his strength, and his wife and children, tenderly nurtured

and cared for, left without provision to do battle, in their grief and helplessness, with a cold and bitter world. We see a loving Christian mother taken from her little ones when they most need her, and they are left to grow up as best they may under the cold shelter and hard rule of an unloving guardian. And the thought arises—Could not He who pitieth us as a father pitieth his children, who comforts us as one whom his mother comforteth, have caused that this husband, this mother, should not have died? He has done things as great and gracious in their own way for us before. Every human history contains a record of special providences and Divine interpositions, in situations of extreme danger and difficulty, which may be regarded as little short of miraculous. Why, therefore, does not He who, in those former instances, manifested His love and power in our behalf—interfere for the prevention of this present calamity?

The widow of Zarephath might have said of Elisha, Could not this man who multiplied my cruse of oil and my barrel of meal day after day in the midst of universal famine, have caused that my child should not have died? Why the power should have failed in the one case and not in the other must have seemed a dark mystery to her. Why should it have gone so

far as it did and no farther? This is the perplexing element in all the trials of life. Just as of old Christ's miracle-working created disappointment and perplexity because it went only a certain length—for it seemed so unaccountable that the extraordinary power should be put forth only in a few cases and at rare intervals, when it might have been exercised on every occasion in bestowing blessings and warding off evils—so it seems a disappointing and perplexing circumstance in the providential dealing of God with His own people, that when He does so much for them He does not do more; that when He gives them so many things richly to enjoy He takes away or withholds from them the very thing upon which their heart is most set. It is natural to expect that the favourite of Heaven should be exempted from the evils which fall upon others. A friend, if he had the power, would make life easy and pleasant to his friend; a father, if he could, would remove every thorn from the path of his child. God has the power, and if He is the Father and the Friend of His people, why does He allow them to suffer and to die when by the slightest exercise of His will He could have averted suffering and death? The sorely-tried believer may say, "If I am His, why am I thus?" And yet, as a matter of fact, the special favour of God to the widow of Zarephath did not prevent her son

from dying; the love of Jesus did not shield the family of Bethany from bereavement. David said, and his own history abundantly verified the words, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;" and the Saviour said to His disciples, and the saying was fulfilled throughout their whole subsequent experience, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He who opened the eyes of the blind man in Jerusalem could no doubt have prevented the death of Lazarus. That He had the power is self-evident; there is no difficulty about that. But, as I have shown already, there were higher considerations that restrained His omnipotent arm. The personal discipline of Lazarus, the education of His sisters in the higher Christian life, the convicting the Jews of righteousness and judgment, the fulfilment of Christ's own destiny, and the instruction and comfort of the whole Christian church down to the latest ages, were purposes to be subserved by our Lord's allowing the illness of Lazarus to run its natural course.

And considerations, in their own order equally great and gracious, will be seen in every case in which the natural evils of life are allowed to do their work upon God's children. Indeed, every instance of suffering on the part of His people is only an illustration of the great principle which regulated His treatment of



our first parents. He could have kept Adam and Eve after the fall in Eden, with all things fair and pleasant around them ; but He chose rather to banish them into the wilderness, that through the discipline of its trials and hardships they might recover a higher happiness and nobler freedom than they had lost. This exile He Himself shared ; He went out with them from Eden into the accursed and thorny waste, and was afflicted in all their afflictions. God could still surround His people with the calm idyllic life of Eden, but He has a higher blessedness in store for them ; and therefore He allures them into the wilderness, that there He may speak comfortably to them, and establish closer and tenderer relations between Himself and them than they could ever otherwise have known. He could have saved Lazarus from death ; but how much, in that case, would have been lost to Lazarus, to his sisters, and to all the race. In allowing Lazarus to die, He had the higher good of all concerned at heart ; and, in the sad lonely wilderness of bereavement to which He allured the sisters, He made Himself their companion in tribulation ; He wept with them and shared the burden of their sorrow. Not to our first parents in the garden did God disclose what He has shown to the fallen guilty race of men, in the wilderness of pain and toil and death to which

He banished them—His pillar of cloud and fire, His tabernacle of witness, His smitten rock, and all His watchful solicitude. Not to the unbroken and prosperous family-circle of Bethany did Jesus reveal such exquisite tendernesses and depths of holy pity and love, as He disclosed when death had made their home desolate and their hearts empty and lonely. He talked with them in the Eden of their unblighted domestic happiness, and manifested to them the wisdom of the teacher and the kindness of the friend; but, in the wilderness of their bereavement, under the dark shadow of death that brooded over their home and heart, He wept and suffered with them; He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled; He revealed to them the unutterable beauty and tenderness of a love that passeth knowledge. And, therefore, as it was expedient for the disciples that Jesus Himself should go away, in order that the Comforter might come and show to them higher glimpses of the Saviour's person and work; so it was expedient that Lazarus should go away from the home in Bethany, in order that, in the loss of the earthly friend, the sisters might gain truer and nobler views of the Heavenly Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The power of Jesus could have prevented death; but they needed to know other attributes of His nature besides His mere power; they needed to

know His sympathy and tenderness ; they needed to know the power, not of His arm only, but of His heart. We need other revelations of God's character besides His omnipotence, and these revelations can only be given in times of sorrow and bereavement. "Thou knowest my soul in adversities, and I know Thee in them," may every tried and trusting soul say to God.

In due time the sisters of Lazarus knew and understood fully the reason why He who opened the eyes of the blind man did not interpose to save their brother from death. And, similarly, if we endure patiently and profit wisely by the evils which God permits to come upon us, we shall know in due time the reason of them and be satisfied. We shall understand why He who feeds us day by day, by an agency as wonderful as that of Elijah's ravens, should, nevertheless, as in his case, allow our brook to dry up ; why He who causes our barrel of meal and cruse of oil to be replenished afresh every day, should, notwithstanding, leave the child or the friend of our love to die. We shall understand why He who dwells with us as our loving Friend and familiar Guest should tarry while our trouble goes on, and permit death to outrun His love ; why He who has done such great things for us, whereof we are glad, opened our eyes, and raised us from death to life, should yet have allowed the object

of our heart's devotion to die, and life to be to us henceforward like the white silent channel of a brook from which the water has failed. And, in the understanding, we shall realise the blessed truth, that He who sent His own Son to share their toil and suffering, when He sent fallen humanity into exile, sends the Man of Sorrows with us into the midst of our sorrows, that memories of His own Gethsemane and Calvary may mingle with ours; and thus, in the fellowship of His sufferings, create a friendship and establish a communion which will make the bed of sickness and the chamber of sorrow and death seem the very gate of heaven.

And now Jesus stood beside the sepulchre. It was a simple cave hewn out of the side of the hill, on the outside of the village—for the Jews never placed the dead among the living—and not far from the boundary wall. Within this cave there were smaller cavities formed in the sides of the rock for the reception of the bodies of the dead, after the manner of the Egyptian tombs in which mummies were deposited. Over the mouth of the cave was laid a huge stone, in order to guard the remains within from desecration, and especially from the ravages of dogs, jackals, and other beasts of prey, which have not unfrequently been known to rifle tombs of their contents. This posses-

sion of a family vault, a separate place of interment, is another incidental proof of the wealth and social position of the household of Bethany. Only the wealthy were laid in the sepulchres of their fathers—in portions of land purchased in fee, and set apart for purposes of family interment. The poor were buried promiscuously in ground that belonged to the whole community. It is significantly said that “The Living Water” sat weary and thirsty beside the well of Sychar; here it is said, with equal significance, that “The Resurrection and the Life” stood before a tomb—groaning in Himself. Without, in the open air, the sky is serenely blue, and the sunshine purely bright, and the landscape calmly fair. The feathery palm-trees and dusky olives cast their motionless shadows on the white limestone rocks, as if there were no sorrow or death in the world. Within all is gloom and horror, from the thought of which the soul recoils: a dead, forsaken body, buried out of sight, though once tenderly loved and admired, undergoing, as it might appear, that fearful process of decomposition by which dust returns to dust and ashes to ashes. The contrast between the living beauty of unconscious nature, and the repulsive stillness and decay of death—which often strikes us sadly on a bright summer day, when laying our withered roses and lilies in the garden

sepulchre—must have forced itself upon the attention of Jesus, and deepened for Him the solemn sadness of the scene. It is said that He groaned *in Himself* when He came to the grave. The cause of His ~~groaning on this occasion~~ is, I think, different from that which moved Him so deeply before. His sorrow is no longer outward, but inward. None of the surrounding spectators, watching him keenly, can see the thrill of anguish that passes from His heart through His frame, and pulsates in every nerve. It is a secret sorrow, with which no stranger can intermeddle—a cross which cannot be displayed—a groaning which cannot be uttered. No doubt the same indignant horror of death as the seal and token of sin, as an unnatural usurpation over a race made for immortality, entered into the emotion in both cases; but the former groaning had in it more of the sympathetic element—it was caused by sorrow for the death of a friend; whereas this groaning is purely personal, and is caused by the anticipation of His own death. We may safely suppose, that not only was His heart sorely pained because of the breach which death had made in this once tenderly-united family, tearing asunder the most cherished human relationship, but also that the cave in the rock, with the stone laid at its entrance, presented to Him in anticipation the

picture of Joseph's tomb hewn out of the rock in the garden, to which He was fast hastening. He who looked through all the natural causes of death to its origin in the moral lapse of man, looked, we may suppose, on this occasion beyond the immediate circumstances of the burial of His friend—to the consummation of the power of death in His own death. His prescient eye at that moment overlooked time and place, and saw across the valley of Jehosaphat, at the foot of Calvary, that "place of a skull," where His own dead body, with the wounds of the cross upon it, was to repose in the humiliation of the grave. He saw that grim dungeon of the Castle of Despair, white with the blanched bones of countless victims, whose gates closing a brief space around Him, He was to carry triumphantly up the hill of God; where, through the greatest of defeats, He was to achieve the mightiest of victories. He saw the dark, thorny, blood-stained path, leading down to the dungeon, which He had to traverse with the crushing load of human guilt upon His soul, with the desertion of Heaven and the malignity of hell and the cruelty of earth concentrating and deepening into the hour and power of darkness around Him; and oh! need it be wondered at that His heart should for a moment have sunk within Him—that the terrible prospect should

have extorted from Him that groan of unspeakable anguish.

Our Saviour's expiatory death and burial, with all the painful and humiliating circumstances connected with them, were never absent from His thoughts; but there were moments when the anticipation of them came over Him with peculiar vividness and agonizing power. Here and there in the story of the Evangelists we come upon some dark significant expression which shows us how bitter an element it formed in His cup of suffering. Ominous hints of some great calamity awaiting Him fell ever and anon from His lips in earnest converse with His awe-struck disciples. Again and again we hear Him saying, although they comprehended it not, "The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men;" "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." With touching resemblance to our impatience at the prospect of some imminent evil which we can foresee but cannot prevent, He hastened to Jerusalem, as it were, more speedily to anticipate His certain doom. And surely it is not unlawful to suppose that He who was perfect man as well as perfect God, felt the longing that we often feel, to realise and terminate the expected suffering, since it was inevitable—to abridge the interval of



terrible waiting and suspense, and obtain a dreadful relief from more dreadful anticipation by plunging at once into the worst of the reality. Like an alpine region, where the only scenery is one great mountain range and its shadows; so His whole life was one unutterable sorrow and its gloomy anticipations, one long weary walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The prevision of the darker sufferings in store for Him, was ever harder to bear than the anguish of His present sufferings; and He needed ever and anon to brace Himself up by calling to mind the object of His suffering, and the joy set before Him. "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."

And surely this anguish which Jesus suffered through the knowledge and anticipation of the future—an anguish which was mostly inward, but occasionally burst the bonds of reserve and became visible though inexplicable to others—suggests to us irresistibly the greatness of the love which He bore to the souls of men, the fixity of His determination to do the will of His Father in the salvation of mankind. It must have been an infinite love indeed which such stormy waters could not quench, which such overwhelming floods could not drown; it must have been a Divine will indeed which sorrows from hell, earth and heaven,

the endurance and the prospect of them, could not turn aside by a hairbreadth from its invincible purpose of mercy. And surely it is a precious thought, that because His whole path of life was darkened by the shadow cast before it of atoning death, He has, in bearing this peculiar form of suffering, delivered us who otherwise all our life-time would be subject to bondage through fear of death. From the wretchedness of a life continually saddened and embittered by the fear of death, Christ has freed us by bearing it Himself, by becoming our substitute in this as in all other things. To those who have no interest in Christ, death must of necessity be "the king of terrors;" for there is nothing in their case to mitigate its evils and relieve its gloom. And the wonder is that they walk so carelessly through life with such a sword of Damocles hanging over them. But those who are united to Jesus in the bonds of the everlasting covenant should have no cause for dread at the prospect of dissolution. It is natural, no doubt, that the thought of the mysterious change awaiting them should occasionally cast a gloom and a heaviness over their minds; that they should shrink at times with nature's weakness from the suffering, the loss, the destruction of beauty and happiness that accompany it. But ever to look forward to it with terror, ever to live under

its darkening and blighting power, this in their case would be inexcusable. Those to whom Christ said by representation amid the tombs of Bethany, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die," stand in a very different position from those who have no hope, and ought therefore to rise above the fears and forebodings of nature. The death which Jesus dreaded, and which drew from Him the inward groan at Lazarus' tomb, they have no reason whatever to dread. Jesus has taken away its sting, blunted it in the wounds of the cross. All that made death truly terrible, the wrath of God, the curse of sin, has been endured by their Surety and Substitute. And now nothing remains behind but the shadow of the destroying angel's wing, that quenches the light of life only for a moment—the simple act of yielding up the breath, with all its natural sorrows and sufferings, and the transition from a world of sin and toil and woe, to a heaven of eternal purity and happiness.

Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." As I have said, there is a strange commingling of strength and helplessness, ignorance and knowledge in all our Saviour's proceedings on this occasion, which is exceedingly perplexing to many minds; and yet, when the clue is obtained, we are lost in wonder at the

perfect consistency of His whole method of procedure. Commentators say that in one instance He manifests His Divine power, and in another His human weakness; in one case He speaks and acts as man, in another case as God. But such an explanation is altogether unworthy of the dignity of our Saviour's character and the glory of His work. It is a low conception which would represent Him as now hiding His Divinity behind the mask of the features of an ordinary man, and now allowing it to shine forth in all its naked effulgence; as presenting to us, first, the Divine side of His life, and then the human, as if there were no bond of union between them. Such a conception is a virtual giving up of the fact of the incarnation itself, which, if it is anything, is the absolute unity of the Divine and the human in one person. There is a harmony about all His words and actions, on this great occasion, which is altogether missed by those who believe in a Nestorian separation between the Divine and the human, if not in His person, at least in His words and actions. Christ acted uniformly as God and man, for the Divine nature was in Him not only co-existent with His human, but also co-efficient; and His human nature is the only medium through which we can behold His Divine. And therefore there is a profound purpose and sig-

nificance in this command to the spectators to roll away the stone from the entrance into the tomb. It is a typical command, disclosing to us things higher than itself, revealing a glimpse of the difference between the new creation and the old. In the old creation God accomplished alone and unaided the mighty work of summoning the world into existence. He rested when His work was finished in a sublime solitude, and none shared His rest. The morning stars indeed sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, when the foundation of the earth was laid and the cope-stone of the wonderful structure was brought forth; but their song of joy was a song of praise on account of a victory achieved by another, not of exultation over a triumph achieved by themselves. They gave no help, and therefore they could not enter into the rest, the joy of their Lord; that restful joy which we ourselves experience when our dreams are realised and our efforts crowned with success. But in the new creation man is a fellow-worker with God; he works out his salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And in seeking the salvation of others, he is enabled in some measure to understand what Christ did and endured for himself; he sympathises with the love and pity for the souls of

men which induced Christ to lay down His life, and would willingly imitate this noble self-sacrifice and devotion. He enters into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and even fills up, as the apostle says of himself, "that which is left behind of the afflictions of Christ, for His body's sake, the Church." And when his labour of love is successful, he rises into communion with the joy that is in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, which fills the heart of God Himself, and which was set before Christ as the reward of His sufferings. Not by the Almighty fiat alone is the new creation established upon the ruins of the old, but also by the sweat of man's brow and the sweat of his soul. And in the end, when the work of grace is all finished, and the primeval blessing is more than restored, all who have helped to bring about the glorious consummation, by their tears, or their toils, shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and rest with Him from their labours, and their works shall follow them. "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." We are companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. We are crucified with Him here, and we reign with Him above. The sword of the kingdom on earth is the sword of the Lord

and of Gideon; and the new song of heaven is the song of Moses and the Lamb.

This is the far-reaching truth, of which the simple and apparently insignificant words of Christ to the bystanders beside the tomb of Lazarus testify—"Take ye away the stone." One of the most striking characteristics of the miracles of Jesus is the fact that they all fall in, by a natural harmony, with that law of human life which ordains that in the sweat of his face man shall eat bread—that all blessings shall come from toil and pain. These miracles were not irregular wonders, but Divine aids to human labour, Divine developments and completions of human beginnings. They were performed, not without human means, but through them. In them man helped Christ as far as he could to perform them. In each of them man had his part to do; and upon this human basis Christ accomplished what man could not do. The weakness of man was aided and supplemented by the Almighty power of God. The disciples toil all night against contrary winds and waves, until nature is fairly exhausted, and Christ comes in the fourth watch and stills the storm, and brings the boat immediately to land. The servants fill the water-pots and draw out the water, and Christ changes the water thus drawn into wine. Elijah stretches himself upon the dead

child ; he warms the cold corpse by his own vitality ; this is all that he can do in preparation for the miracle ; and what human skill and love cannot do, God accomplishes, and restores the dead child to life. The spectators roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre ; that is as far as human devotion and power can go in the overcoming of death :—

“They to the verge have followed what they love,  
And on the insuperable threshold stand,  
With cherished names its speechless calm reprove,  
And stretch in the abyss their ungrasped hand.”

And on this utmost vantage-ground of human effort Jesus takes His stand, and raises the dead Lazarus to life.

We misunderstand the significance of the words, “Take ye away the stone,” if we imagine them simply to be a request made by Jesus to the spectators to do what they could easily do—relegating to them a duty for which His own Divine power was not necessary, and which it was of no consequence whether they or He performed it. The act implied far more than that. The rolling away of the stone by the bystanders was as essential a part of the miracle as the loud voice of Jesus that broke the stillness of death. Without the one the other could not have been effectual. And how instructive, in this light, is this feature in the



miracle, which we are apt to overlook as a mere trifle! Does it not emphatically teach us that, “in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act?” If we are at all in earnest, we cannot but feel that, in every work to which we are called, there is much that we ourselves have to do; and until we act our own part, we cannot expect that God will accomplish and bless the work. “Wherefore criest thou unto me?” said God to Moses at the Red Sea; “speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.” Instead of standing still and idly crying to God for help, they had something to do themselves. They had to move on in the face of seeming impossibilities; and till they did this their prayers and cries to heaven would avail them nothing. Their being in that strait at all was God’s doing, for it was through that strait that the path lay to the blessed freedom and enlargement of the promised land. Not, therefore, until they marched forward into the very midst of the sea was the mighty miracle of deliverance wrought out for them. And if we, too, when we come to a crisis in our life, fold our hands in despair, or wait supinely for help, or cry aloud to God in idle distress, neglecting the way of escape which lies before us, we shall never overcome the

difficulty, or rise superior to the trial. It would be well for us to remember at all times that God works by means, and that our own efforts are the very means through which He grants to us an answer to our prayers; that the method in which the Divine influence is exerted on man and for man is more dynamical than mechanical, a vivifying and animating process, heightening and deepening and widening the natural energies and capacities. All the interpositions of Divine providence in our daily life, instead of dispensing with human effort, crown that effort with a blessing which it could not itself work out. Help yourself, not, as it has been well said, and God shall help you—He shall meet you half-way—but, because He *has* helped you and *is* helping you. His own finished work is the fulcrum upon which your work rests, and the lever by which it is carried on. Work out your own salvation, because He *is* working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. There is no condition whatever prescribed, but your working is a proof that God is helping you, and is a carrying out of the aid of God.

But there is a further idea still implied in the command of Christ to the spectators to remove the stone from the grave. That action was a trial or test of their faith. Faith must prove itself by corresponding

work, else it is dead. Faith was required as a prerequisite of all those who were the subjects or got the benefit of Christ's miracles—"Believest thou that I can do this?"—and the reality and degree of the faith had to be shown by some characteristic and significant outward action. It was required of the servants at Cana to fill the water-pots with water, and to draw out and bear to the governor of the feast. The servants might have objected that this was a foolish procedure; that no result could possibly follow the mere transference of water from one vessel to another. Their compliance with the order was therefore a proof of their confidence that Jesus would not set them upon a task which was a mere mockery in itself, and of their faith that some extraordinary result would follow from such an extraordinary procedure. The disciples were commanded to give the multitude to eat; and they might have objected, as in point of fact they did object, to distribute the five loaves and few small fishes among so many thousands—"What are these among so many?" It might seem to them an absurd and childish thing to attempt to feed so great a crowd by means so out of all proportion inadequate. And yet the very absurdity of the procedure, the disproportion between the means and the end, was meant to be the trial of their faith. It was required of the by-

standers to take away the stone from Lazarus' tomb. This might seem a superfluous and altogether futile proceeding, and Martha interposed to prevent the sacrilegious exposure of the dead—to save Jesus and herself and friends from a spectacle which she supposed could not fail to prove trying and revolting, especially as it was now too late to do any good by it—“Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.” And yet Jesus put her to the test—“Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God.” Without the faith of the sisters and the bystanders He could not perform the miracle. He could not, we are told, do many mighty works in Galilee, on one occasion, because of the unbelief of His countrymen; and now He could not raise the dead Lazarus to life without some measure of faith in His resurrection-power, on the part of the living friends. For faith makes in the soul of man the crooked places straight and the rough places smooth, and thus prepares the way of the Lord for His wonder-working. It is the “miracle within” which overcomes all the obstacles in the soul itself, and thus leads to the performance of the miracle without which overcomes all the obstacles in nature, and renders all things possible to him that believeth. And the outward proof of that

faith was the rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre.

It will be observed, in all the miracles I have specified, that the chief difficulty of faith lay in the employment of human means—in the employment of the help of man. Had these been discarded, the miracles would have been simpler and easier of comprehension. Had the miracles been wrought immediately by Christ, without any human intervention, “they would have been considered as mere acts of the sovereign will of God ; and in that case all reasoning would have been suspended, and the mind would at once have reposed upon the boundless resources of Almighty power ; all things would have been deemed possible with God. But when second causes and human instruments were employed, then it was fully level to the capacities of those concerned to see that these were unsuitable and incompetent to produce the results proposed.” Had Christ engaged to raise Lazarus from the dead as the direct effect of His own omnipotence, of the power of God working in and by Him, then a simple reliance upon the truth and ability of Him who promised would have silenced every doubt. Martha would in all probability have believed that He could do this, for did she not say, “But I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it

thee." But when He took the roundabout way of employing human help, and asking the friends around the tomb to remove the stone, He brought in a questionable element, and interposed means altogether inadequate to produce such a result. Undoubtedly a far more submissive obedience of faith was called for by the circumstance that Jesus was guided to the tomb by the Jews, and that He ordered them to remove the stone from before it, than if He had simply and at once commanded Lazarus in the name of God to rise from the dead.

And as with the miracles of Jesus, so with all God's dealings with us still. The difficulty of faith always lies in the employment of means that seem disproportionate to the ends. It is part and parcel of the whole system of the Christian religion. It appertained to the Founder of it Himself, who gave offence to His countrymen because of the incongruity between the greatness of His pretensions and the humbleness of His origin, between the mighty powers which He possessed and the weakness and ordinary appearance of His person and associations—"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Joseph and Mary?" If God should make bare His arm and accomplish some great wonder immediately, we should have no difficulty in admitting the fact and believing in the result, for we know that

God can do anything; but if He employs some round-about agency of ordinary laws and common operations, we stumble at these instrumentalities, and refuse to recognise the Divine Hand in the result at all. If He answered our prayer directly from heaven, we should be less perplexed than when He answers us, as it is, by the ordinary experiences of human life. The great stumbling-block which modern science is putting in the way of religious faith is its doctrine of uniformitarianism, which is proving to us more and more that God works by natural ordinary means, and according to a uniform consistent method. But it is necessary that these secondary causes and instruments should be interposed, in order to try our faith and test our spiritual discernment; to see if we can look beyond the natural to the supernatural, and trace the finger of God even in the ordinary events which befall us, and in the weak and foolish things of life by which He works His gracious will.

The saying, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days," is very appropriately put into the mouth of Martha. It is characteristic of her outspokenness and officiousness. Dr. Plumptre has said that we judge wrongly of her, if we see in her words the utterance of an impatient or desponding unbelief; that they show, on the contrary, how deeply she had

penetrated into the meaning of Christ's words about "resurrection and life;" that she was so comforted by the thought of the true spiritual victory over death, to which Christ referred, that she no longer expected that the power of the eternal life would show itself in the renewal of the earthly. But we can hardly give her credit for so great a stretch of advancement in the Divine life at this stage. She, no doubt, declared her belief in Jesus as the Son of God who should come into the world; but the value of that confession of faith is somewhat qualified, when we reflect that all her questions and answers to Jesus show a readiness and unembarrassed vigour, which we do not usually find associated with a profound intelligence and a thoughtful, spiritual disposition. We are shut up to the conclusion indeed that, like Thomas, despondency had assumed the predominance in her soul over the hope that had been partially aroused. Though she had heard from Jesus' lips the wondrous words, "I am the resurrection and the life," yet she believed not that there could be a remedy for one who had already seen corruption. Jesus might have prevented death, or raised to life when life had just fled; but the decomposition of the grave would defy even His power. It was a moment of unbelief, when the bright blue space of heaven cleared in her soul, was again



covered over with dark drifting clouds of doubt and fear. And her words are the saddest of all human words, as disclosing the humiliating and shameful process through which the beautiful and beloved form is taken down in the kindly darkness and secrecy of its mother earth—in order to be made up again in honour and glory, eternal in the heavens.

We are not, however, to take the words of Martha as descriptive of a real fact, but as expressive of her own conjecture, drawn from the natural order of things, and the length of time that her brother had lain in the grave. There is nothing in the narrative to lead us to take for granted that corruption had taken place in the dead body; and although decomposition goes on in a hot country with great rapidity, necessitating almost immediate burial, yet we must not overlook the retarding effect of the low temperature of the cave in which Lazarus was interred, which was doubtless very much cooler and drier than the air outside. We have also incidental proof that the death of Lazarus must have taken place in winter, in the month of December, when the climate, of course, is much colder; and the great elevation of Bethany above the level of the sea must have further refrigerated the air. A body in such a place of sepulture, at such an elevation, and in such a season, might well

have remained unchanged for even a longer period than four days. Indeed the nature of the miracle, as Trench has well pointed out, requires that we should come to such a conclusion; for it would be giving it a monstrous character, altogether foreign to that which belongs to all the other miracles of Christ, to suppose that He resuscitated the already decomposed body of Lazarus. It would involve a designed augmentation of the miracle which the expositor must guard against; for Jesus, as I have already said, invariably diminished, instead of exaggerated, His works. It is far simpler to suppose, with Olshausen, that by natural means—which, as we have seen, were quite sufficient, and cases frequently occur in which decomposition does not commence until very late—the body of Lazarus, just because it was to be re-animated, was, according to the providence of God, preserved from corruption. And we must regard it as a part of the same providential care that the body was not embalmed, according to the custom of the richer Jews, although the sisters had spikenard, at least, in the house.

We must not overlook the touching allusion to Martha as “the sister of him that was dead,” although it was not necessary for the sake of distinction so to name her. When the Shunammite urged her suit

before Elisha, for the restoration of her greatest earthly treasure, with a beautiful propriety she is spoken of as "the mother of the child." Here, too, with equally beautiful propriety, Martha is called "the sister of him that was dead." Who of all the crowd around but the loving sister of the dead would be afraid that, at the sight of what the tomb might disclose, the image of him which she carried in her heart might be ruined? Who would shrink like her from making the beloved form a spectacle of horror to strangers, seeing that she herself, who cherished it most, was fain to bury it out of sight? Who but a sister would keep Jesus from looking once more on the countenance of the beloved; for she interpreted His command to remove the stone as nothing more than the first step towards the gratification of such a desire?

But, although Martha had let go for a moment her faith in the "Resurrection and the Life," and drifted back into the hopelessness of death, Jesus had not let go His hold of her. In the alternate ebb and flow of her faith, His everlasting arms were underneath her. He checked her unbelief, but it was with wonderful tenderness and gentleness. "Did I not tell thee, that if thou wouldest only believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." He brought to her recollection the

words which He addressed to the messenger sent to Him beyond Jordan, in the crisis of her brother's fever—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." He reminded her of His conversation with her when she met Him on His return, regarding the power of faith to appropriate the plenitude of the blessings that dwelt in Himself. He bore with meekness her expression of hopelessness, as He bore with her upbraiding when she could not understand why He had not come at once to her help. He who wept with her, pitied her weakness and ignorance, and condescended to them with all the sympathy and help which they required. He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until He had sent forth judgment unto victory. He would come down like rain upon the mown grass upon her broken hopes and blighted affections, and help her to grow again, from the relics of her happiness, a fruitful faith and an unshaken trust. Some natures—and Martha's was one of them—can only come to rest through trouble, to light through shadows, to faith through doubt. If she could only believe—if she had faith even as a grain of mustard-seed—mountains of difficulty would be removed before her, and seeming impossibilities converted into

accomplished facts. She could stretch a hand through death and grasp the blessed reality beyond; and the portal of the tomb would be to her but the gate of heaven. If thou wouldest only believe—if thou hadest, as some one has remarked, but even a bare root of faith, stripped of its foliage, striking down into thy soul with a firm grasp in the winter and the darkness—then the absent bloom and fruit would soon appear, and the summer of full unfolding and the morning of bright disclosure would soon come. Thou shouldest see through the gloom the glory, and through the death the life. And as He dealt with Martha in her faithlessness and weakness, so He deals with us. He is no austere man, reaping where he had not sowed, and gathering where he had not strawed. He condescends to our infirmities; He checks our unbelief with tenderness and pity, knowing the shortness of our vision and the frailty of our frame. He bears with unwearied patience and gentleness all our questionings and petulances, all our doubts and fears. He brings to our remembrance, for our comfort and encouragement, all that He said and did to us in the years of the right hand of the Most High. If we could only believe in Him, and take Him simply and confidently at His word, we should be saved from all

our fears and troubles ; the difficulties of life would vanish before us ; we should find the way to good through evil ; and life, which is the heir of death, would become its conqueror, smiling at its impotence, and making the grave its cradle. Faith is the all-conquering principle. It is by the exercise of faith that we carry on the business of life ; and, glorified by being associated with Divine and eternal things, it is the victory that overcomes the world. And in the end, however painful the trial and long-deferred the result, the grandest triumph and the greatest glory fall to those who have the greatest faith.

The weeping and groaning, by which even the Saviour's own heart had been wrung, is hushed. The spiritual obstacle of Martha's unbelief is removed ; the physical obstacle of the stone is rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre by human hands, and the yawning gloom within revealed in all its suggestive dreadfulness. And now nothing stands between the living and the dead. Man has done all that he could towards the remedying of death ; he has opened the door of the tomb, taken away every spiritual intervention in himself and every physical intervention in surrounding circumstances, and thus prepared the way of the Lord. And now the Lord of life interferes to do what man cannot do—to restore the dead to life. His

disciples, the sisters, and the Jews who had come to comfort them, are pressing behind Him, a solemn and awe-struck group. The huge cathedral of St. Paul's in London is used by the peasants of Dorking as a weather glass, for it is never seen from that distance except in the clear light that precedes a shower of rain. And so a spectator, beholding afar-off this group of persons around a tomb, would have supposed that they had simply come to repair the grave, or to pay some necessary tribute of affection to the dead. The sublimest event that ever took place in the history of the world up to that time, would have been dwarfed at a little distance to a mere customary visit to a tomb. For a moment the group of friends stand silent and waiting. Then, with holy face uplifted from the dark receptacle of death before Him to the bright blue living heavens above, and lit by the sunshine which he Himself had made, Jesus addresses His thanksgiving prayer to His Father in a voice audible to the whole assemblage. He does not ask that His desire may be granted, but He gives thanks that it is granted—"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." We are not to suppose that the reference here is to

any special prayer which Jesus uttered aloud on a previous occasion. Jesus conceived in His own spirit at the moment a wish to raise Lazarus from the dead; and, in the formation of that wish, He regarded the work as already accomplished by His Father. He did not pray in the sense in which we pray; He did not ask as we ask; for, being always in the bosom of the Father, even on earth, there was a constant uninterrupted communication of power and blessing from the one to the other, so that what He saw the Father do He was able to do also. And when He thanks God that He had heard His prayer, this cannot imply that there was a possibility of His prayer not being heard and granted. The prayer of Christ and the answer of God were inseparable; they were one and the same, for He Himself says, "I and the Father are one." He did not require to ask for special power to work this miracle; He was able to raise Lazarus from the grave by the continuous uninterrupted power which He possessed as dwelling in God and God in Him.

It has been considered strange that Jesus uttered this declaration in the presence of the assembly. Strauss cavils at it as usual, and looks upon it as a piece of affectation, as meant merely for show. But surely it was necessary that the deed which He was



about to do should be cleared from all ambiguities and false suppositions, and be unmistakeably connected with heaven—that the people should know that Jesus claimed His power from above. Jesus explained on a subsequent occasion, when an audible voice came from heaven in answer to His Father—“Father, glorify thy name,” “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again”—that the voice came not because of Him, but for the sake of the multitude. He needed not this voice of God for the confirmation of His own faith, as a testimony to His Divine rank; it was entirely for the benefit of the bystanders. And so Jesus uttered His thanksgiving prayer in the hearing of the people around Him on this occasion, not for His own sake, but that they might know the intimate and inseparable communion between the Father and the Son. And although Jesus did not obtain His power to call Lazarus from the grave by means of prayer, still, by connecting the miracle with prayer to God, He gives to us the highest possible testimony to the importance and efficacy of prayer. He who has learned that lesson from Him who alone can teach it, through whom alone can prayer be offered, and who Himself lived a life of prayer, has laid his hand on that “golden key which opens the palace of eternity.”

Although Jesus wrought as the equal of God in the wonderful work, we have, nevertheless, a wonderful blending in it of subjection and authority, of obedience and command, of the lowly servant and the great "I am." He who cried with a voice of almighty power, "Lazarus, come forth," audibly expressed His dependence upon God. In the highest displays of His Divine power, Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient; He was made under the law of God; He manifested Himself as the perfect Son, living in dependence upon the Father. And it is because of this that we have such contrasts and apparent contradictions, otherwise so inexplicable, between the lowly self-sacrificing nature of Jesus, and the wonderful claims He puts forth for Himself. The thanksgiving prayer of Jesus before raising Lazarus is of a piece with the thanksgiving prayer which He uttered before the miracle of the loaves and fishes. In both cases He did not wish the spectators to suppose that He was making an arbitrary use of His supernatural power; on the contrary, He wished them to know that He was acting, under the Father, in obedience to laws which regulated the common affairs of human life. The raising of Lazarus was no more an irregular wonder than the feeding of the multitude. Both fell in by a natural harmony

with the ordinary ways of Divine dealing; and therefore they bear a gracious and useful testimony to what Jesus was, and what He came to declare and do. Both miracles were wrought under solemn and orderly arrangements. Jesus prays, and becomes subject to law, in order that He may act as God, and manifest His divine power by a miracle. He stoops to conquer; He serves that He may rule; He obeys that He may triumph. And when we see in His mightiest acts this wonderful commingling of human dependence and Divine independence—this unity with the Father, and this association with ourselves—we are filled with a joyful feeling, for we realise “that mystery where God-in-man is one with man-in-God.” The Son of God and Son of Man—one with the Father in heaven, one with man upon the earth—proves Himself to be the true Mediator—the living bond between heaven and earth—linking our weakness with the Almighty power, and our mortality with His eternal life.

Some of the early Fathers of the church supposed that the thanksgiving prayer of Jesus records the actual accomplishment of the miracle; that the moment of awakening was earlier; and that the loud call addressed to the dead only effected the coming forth of him who had already been restored to life. But

this explanation would rob the act of Jesus of its profound meaning. The loud voice was not a mere accessory or subordinate feature in the miracle ; it was a primary essential element. It was by the quickening power of that loud voice that life returned to the corpse. Jesus acted here in perfect harmony with the Divine order, which ever attributes to the *voice* of the Son of God the power of quickening the dead and raising them from their graves. Thus St. John says, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." And the loudness of the voice on this occasion is equally significant. It was not by a mere internal prayer, by the mere formation and expression of a wish, by any exercise of arbitrary will, that the mighty miracle was accomplished ; it was by strenuous personal effort, by strong crying and tears. It was not necessary for Christ to summon the tenant of the tomb by such an exertion, so far as His Divine power was concerned. As God, a whisper, a breath, the slightest expression of His will, would have sufficed to break the bands of death. But, in relation to His redemptive work, the loud voice is full of precious meaning. As the Saviour of a world lying under the curse, He could not raise the dead to life by a mere volition costing Him nothing. He had to ex-

pend strength and toil and sorrow proportioned to the difficulty and magnitude of the work. When He raised the daughter of Jairus, who was newly dead, in whose corpse the flickerings of life, as it were, still lingered, just as lingers the last little flame around a brand taken out of a fire, hovering in the air a moment, retreating and then returning to the wood, before it goes out finally—He said, in a low, gentle voice, “Maid, I say unto thee, arise.” Less exertion was needed in this case to recall the spirit, for she was but barely in the grasp of the enemy. When He raised the widow of Nain’s son, He pitched His voice in a higher key, “Young man, I say unto thee, arise”—for the body was longer dead; it was cold, and carried out to the tomb; and therefore more strength had to be put forth to rescue the prey from the mighty. But Lazarus was four days in the grave, was completely under the dominion of the destroyer; and therefore it was needed that Christ should cry with a loud voice, “Lazarus come forth.”

The loud voice was also necessary to convince the spectators of the reality of the Divine agency in the miracle. Without that voice they might have doubted whether Christ had anything to do with the marvellous restoration. His presence there, and the coming forth of Lazarus from the tomb, might have been regarded

as an extraordinary coincidence ; but their relation as cause and effect could have been shown in no other way so satisfactorily as by calling on the dead by name to come forth. This loud voice points back to the Almighty fiat, "Let there be light, and there was light," that called a living world full of order and beauty out of a chaos of death and darkness ; and it points forward to the loud voice that will call the dead from their graves on the last day, and accomplish a grander work in the resurrection than in the original creation. The miracle of Bethany was a type and an anticipation of the general resurrection, and corresponds to it in all its features and details. By the loud voice, therefore, at the grave of Lazarus, we are reminded that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. The ear, the counterpart of the voice, is, as Dr. George Wilson has well said, the most human of all our organs. It is by it that we hold most intimate and endearing communion with our fellow-creatures, and most powerfully impress and influence each other. It is the sense of hearing which most readily and most effectually lends itself to emotional feeling ; and that which reaches us through the ear stirs the soul more deeply than what meets

our eye. It is to the ear that the summons to awake to spiritual life is now addressed; and the summons hereafter to awake to eternal life will also be addressed to the ear, and it shall be the first of all the senses to awake to a consciousness of a new existence beyond the grave. The infant enters this life with a cry, and its sorrow is soothed by its mother's voice; we shall enter into the life to come with the sound of the Redeemer's voice in our ear, comforting us as one whom his mother comforts, and hushing to everlasting rest all the sorrows of earth. Surely the honour which God has put upon the ear of man above all the other senses should invest the preaching of the Gospel—the Divinely-appointed means by which we are prepared for time and eternity—in this the day of our merciful visitation, with greater interest and importance; should impress upon our minds with more emphasis and solemnity the great moral admonition contained in the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." May we all incline our ears now and hear the still small voice of Divine love, that our souls may live; and in the last great day we shall hear the loud voice of the Son of Man saying, "Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead," and we shall join in the new song of praise of the risen saints, more wonderful

than the chorus of creation, when "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy."

He whom Jesus addressed in the loud voice was no longer living, but dead. He had passed out of the corporate life of mankind to join the dead system of nature, like an effete worn-out particle that is eliminated from the human frame when it has served its purpose, and goes into the atmosphere or the earth to form part of other things. And yet our Saviour's words show to us that it is not so. That dead Lazarus within the tomb is not a thing, but a person. He has not become a part of the dead inert universe; he is still in the communion of life, in the membership of the human race. The tie that binds him to the family of mankind is not broken. He is living in Christ, in Him who only hath life, in whom all mankind live and move and have their being, who is the life of the universe, and from whose life our life is but a feeble spark which would go out if separated from Him, as a portion of a flame on a log would go out if separated from the fire that kindled and feeds it. In Him Lazarus is already risen from the dead, is already most truly alive; and the miracle which He works is but the mere outward proof of this great truth. Lazarus is raised from the dead before the eyes of



men, because in Christ he is already raised from the dead. His life can be restored, because in Christ it is hid. Just as our Saviour lifted up the veil in the miracles of Capernaum and Cana, to show to us who it is that is constantly multiplying our bread in the harvest field and constantly changing water into wine in the vineyard, so in the miracle of Bethany He lifts the veil from death to show to us the enduring life that is in it—to show to us that nothing can break the communion of saints with Christ and with one another in Him.

And how much of precious truth is involved in our Saviour calling Lazarus by the name he bore while living! It is in entire harmony with the intimate and endearing relationship which subsisted between them, that Jesus should now have named the name of His friend. The subjects of the other two miracles of restoration, the daughter of Jairus and the widow of Nain's son, were strangers to Him. He had no associations of tenderness connected with them. Perhaps in the limitation of His human nature He did not know their names; for He met them on the occasion of the miracle for the first time, and no inquiry, so far as we know, was made regarding their name. And therefore when He stands by the bedside of the one He says, "Maid, I say unto thee,

arise," and by the bier of the other He says, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." He does not call them by name; He works the miracle in an impersonal way. But Lazarus was His own familiar friend, and therefore He calls him by the dear old household name which had often in former days been upon His lips and in His mind; and by so doing He teaches us not only that His love reaches out beyond death, but also that in death the object of His love retains the old identity. Lazarus is still all that Lazarus was; all that is involved in the name of Lazarus belongs to him now, though lying in the grave, as truly and fully as when he lived. Death has no power to destroy or alter human nature. It cannot annihilate a single human faculty or function. It can obliterate no memory; it can weaken no affection in any human being whose nature Christ has taken. All that is best and truest survives unimpaired the act of dissolution. Jesus at the tomb of His friend called Lazarus by the same name which he bore in life. On the throne of heaven Jesus called one whose ashes had been scattered to the winds, and whose spirit was in the intermediate world, "Antipas, my faithful martyr." The names which God's children bear on earth are written in the Lamb's book of life; they are engraved upon the palms of God's hands, and shall

be theirs in the heavenly home for ever. And He who said to the sorrowing sisters, "Your brother shall rise again," assures us that, not a stranger spirit, shall rise at the last day, but our own brother, with the same lineaments, the same affections, yea the same endeared name as of old. And how comforting is such an assurance! We have an instinctive conviction in our own hearts that our friends who have gone from us still retain their individuality, and all those characteristics of their nature which endeared them to us on earth; but oh! how precious it is to be expressly told, by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and who called the dead Lazarus by the familiar name which he bore in life, that our instinct does not deceive us.

"Love's too precious to be lost,  
A little grain shall not be spilt."

But from whence was Lazarus called forth? His body was in the tomb; but where was his spirit, his true self? Manifestly, in that spiritual world of which our spirits are the inhabitants even now, and of which this world of sense and sight is the mere shadow—the dial showing the unseen movements behind. We pass out of the vain show—out of the appearances in the midst of which we live—into a world of realities, just

as we descend out of a moorland mist, where everything is vague and distorted and colourless, into a valley whose scenery is brightly illuminated, and all whose features stand out prominently and in their true colours in the sunshine. The scales fall from off our eyes, and the mist is lifted up, and we behold the invisible things of God that were faintly revealed to us by the objects amid which our earthly life was spent. We behold the brighter scenes of which those on earth are but the draught or copy; the sea of glass, the river of life, the sun that shall no more go down, the trees of life whose leaves shall never fade, and that yield their fruit every month, of which our earthly rivers, and sun, and sea, and trees are as the reflection of a summer landscape in the smooth mirror of a lake, compared with the real objects. Life, like a veil, conceals from us those spiritual realities, just as daylight conceals from us the moon and stars. But death, like darkness, introduces us to them. We are surrounded by the stars in the daytime, but we see them not. The very light of the sun acts as a veil to hide them from us. But when the shades of evening fall, without changing our standing place, we see ourselves in the midst of infinite worlds of amazing grandeur. So the great realities of heaven are around us in life, but the veil of our earthly

tabernacle conceals them from our view. But when the darkness of death comes down upon our eyes—when the veil of flesh is rent—then, indeed, without changing our spot, we are conscious of the world of spirits, we are alive to the glories of the unseen and eternal state. And of this intermediate state—the state of separation between soul and body—Jesus has the key. He Himself went down into this mysterious realm, and returned from it a conqueror, having won the power to open it for us. The ancients believed that the intermediate state was under the sole sway of Pluto, the rival of Jupiter; so that while the upper world basked in the sunshine of life, the lower world was withdrawn from all cheering influences and wrapped in eternal gloom. It was a world of shadows inhabited by shades. But to the Christian there are no rival powers in the universe. One Lord forms the light and creates darkness, and reigns in both worlds and in the passage between. The dark depths of Hades are as much open to His eye and subject to His control as the habitations of men on earth; and to pass into the silent land of death is but to pass from one room to another of the Father's many mansions—

“Death is another life. We bow our heads  
At going out, we think, and enter straight  
Another golden chamber of the King's  
Larger than this, and lovelier.”

The loud voice of Jesus awakes an echo in the spiritual world, as well as in the reverberating darkness of the tomb. For a moment all is still; for a moment the spectators wait; and then they hear a sound within the cave. Their eyes are fixed upon the low doorway in awe and fear. And now the Evangelist records the sublimest event ever witnessed by human eyes, which must have left an indelible impression upon his mind. He writes as if the whole scene were visible to him; as if he were living over again all the incidents of the wonderful hour. A strange figure, muffled from head to foot, appears in the opening of the tomb. The dead man in his grave clothes stands before them, in the fresh open air, under the blue sky, restored to the fellowship of the living world. Is it a dream of the imagination, a delusion of the senses, excited by expectation and hope? Will it melt away like a frosty figure on a window-pane before the increasing sunshine, and leave the place emptier than before? Will it sink back again into the tomb, like the fabled Eurydice, when her husband, Orpheus, bearing her away in his arms from the Infernal Regions to the upper world, looks round with irresistible yearning to catch one glimpse of her beloved face, and loses her for ever? No! It is no phantom which Jesus raises, like the ghost of

Samuel which the witch of Endor summoned from the dead to meet the doomed and despairing king of Israel. It is no vain spectre walking the paths of upper air to hold a brief interview with the sorrowing sisters, and then to vanish, as Protesilaus in Wordsworth's sublime poem was allowed for a few hours to appear to his wife Laodamia, in answer to her passionate supplications, eluding her grasp while she tried to embrace him, and chilling her heart by his calm superiority to all their former earthly love. It is Lazarus himself in the flesh, with all his familiar features and warm human affections, to tarry with his sisters, if tradition be true, for thirty years longer.

Some have expressed astonishment that, while bound hand and foot, he should, nevertheless, have been able to obey the summons of Jesus, and come forth to the light of day ; and they look upon this as a miracle within the miracle. But there is no need for exaggerating the wonder in this way. We see the wise economy of miracles as strikingly displayed in the raising of Lazarus as in all the other mighty works of our Lord. The Divine power is employed only to accomplish what human power cannot do, and works always on the basis of human power. It was the custom among the Egyptians to

swathe separately each member of their mummies with the cerements of the grave; and this fashion was followed by the Jews, as by most of the Oriental nations. Every limb of the corpse, and even every finger of the hands, was wrapped round with its own separate stripes of cloth; and around the whole body was thrown a loose and flowing garment. In this way the action of the hands was hindered, but not the motion of the limbs. Lazarus could not disentangle himself from the grave clothes, but he could come forth from the inner recess of the sepulchre to the entrance. The face was veiled with the sudarium, or the linen cloth, which was folded round the forehead and extended down to the breast. The unexpected appearance of such a figure must have greatly startled the spectators; but small time is left them to express their astonishment. No sooner does the dead step out into life than the voice of Jesus is again heard breaking the awful stillness—“Loose him, and let him go.” Here again, as in the case of the daughter of Jairus, when He commanded the parents to give her meat, Jesus enters into the minutest details of His astonishing act of power. He sees that His friend is still encumbered with the relics of the grave; and He waits not till others awake from their shock of surprise to perceive the clothes that bind and



trouble the risen one. With all the promptitude and decision of love, He orders the spectators to release him from those hindrances, that he may be at liberty to rejoin his friends.

And in this incident we have a proof of the perfection of the love of Jesus—that can enfold the largest and the smallest things in its embrace, as the horizon comprehends equally the lofty mountain and the lowly wild-flower. It is this feature of the miracle that, in an especial manner, brings Jesus home to our hearts. The mighty power of the loud voice bursting open the gates of death awes and overwhelms us, but the still small voice, full of tenderness and human sympathy, commanding the friends to loose Lazarus from the grave clothes and let him go, binds us to Him with the bands of a man. And so it is in all Christ's manifestations of Himself to us. What touches the heart and quickens the pulses of love is the contemplation, not of His grand displays of power and glory, but of the humble details and familiar scenes of His life—such as His taking up children in His arms and blessing them, His suffering the beloved disciple to lean upon His bosom, His weeping at the grave of Lazarus. It is thus also in the bounties of His natural providence. “His lesser works are those which appeal most powerfully to our

hearts." The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork; and these produce upon us a profound impression of reverential awe. But it is when we consider the grass of the field, which shines in the glow of the sun to-day and shrinks in the fire of the oven to-morrow, and yet is adorned with more than the glory of Solomon; when we look down to the minute, homely things of nature, which are little more than visible to the naked eye—the moss on the tree, the lichen on the rock, the weed in the water—and behold the marvellous loveliness and tenderness of hue and form with which they are decked, that we feel most the attraction of His condescending love, and realise that we have a Friend in heaven who sympathises with us in the very humblest of our experiences.

Christ's command to the spectators is also a proof of the thoroughness of His work. Had He raised Lazarus from the dead and left him bound by the grave clothes, there would have been an element of imperfection in the miracle. But He never left anything that He undertook unfinished. What He began He carried through to perfection. The impotent man, whom He heals, He seeks out afterwards and restores to spiritual strength; the blind man, whose eyes He opens, He finds and discloses to him, when prepared

for it, the wonderful revelation of His own Messiahship; the woman, whose inward trouble He cures by the touch of His garment's hem, He visits through open confession with the joy of His salvation; and here Lazarus, whom He frees from the power of death, He frees also from all its trammels and symbols. And in this respect each of His lesser works is a type of His great work of redemption, regarding which He said on the cross, crying with the same loud voice as at Lazarus' tomb, "It is finished." And as He perfected each of His miracles, and all His great historical work on earth, so does He perfect spiritually in each human soul that yields itself to Him that which concerneth it. He will never forsake the work of His hands. What He begins in us He will complete; and He who is the Author will be the Finisher of our faith. He gives us first life, then liberty; frees us from all internal hindrances, that we may free ourselves from all external.

But there is a deeper significance still in the command of Jesus to the spectators to loose Lazarus and let him go. It indicates that human help was needed, not only to prepare the way for the miracle, but also to carry it out and complete it. It was not enough that man should lay the foundation for the work of Christ, in rolling away the stone from the mouth of

the tomb; but he must also bring the cope-stone to put upon the finished work of Christ, in loosing Lazarus from the grave-clothes that bound and hampered him. Human help must begin and *carry to its very end* the help of God. Were it not for the purpose of teaching us this most important lesson, we do not see any meaning in the command of Christ. It would otherwise seem superfluous and ostentatious. To Him who broke the bands of death, the loosing of the grave-clothes would have involved no additional expenditure of Divine power. He could by a wish, a word, as easily have delivered Lazarus from the sepulchral wrappings without any human aid, as He delivered the three Hebrew confessors from the fetters that bound them when they were thrown into the fiery furnace, or rescued Peter from the chains that confined him in the innermost prison at Jerusalem. But He called in the assistance of the spectators to do what His Divine power was not needed to do, and what their human aid could well accomplish, to show to us that it is by human help, *from the beginning to the end*, that He carries on all His redemptive work, from its mightiest processes down to its humblest details. And it is a lesson which, as I have already said, we require very much to learn, and very specially in the things that concern our everlasting peace. We

are apt to look at our deliverance as exclusively God's work, and therefore to devolve all upon Him, while we ourselves are altogether passive, standing still to see the salvation of God. But, as the spectators had to help Jesus, not only to roll away the stone from the grave of the dead, but also to loose the grave-clothes from the form of the living, so we have to help God in carrying out and completing to the very end, by our own efforts, the mighty miracle of restoration from spiritual death to eternal life. His redemption just consists in the restoration of our human freedom, which sin had destroyed. We can use specially regarding it Browning's beautiful words:—

"God, whose pleasure brought  
Man into being, stands away,  
As it were, an hand-breadth off, to give  
Room for the newly-made to live,  
And look at him from a place apart,  
And use his gifts of brain and heart."

We, too, give thanks, in the matter of our redemption, like Jesus Himself, that God has heard our unconscious moan in our state of sin and misery, and heard the intercessory prayer of our Redeemer. And all that we have now to do, in the Divine life of which we are made partakers, is to roll away a stone from a grave that has already lost its victim, and to loose

the ceremonies of death from a life that has already risen. This leaves, however, untouched the great mystery underlying and overarching us everywhere, "how the will of God can so withdraw from ours as to leave us any action of our own, and how it can mingle with ours without overwhelming it."

What a moment of astonishment and delight must that have been to the sisters, as well as to the brother himself, when the grave-clothes were all removed, and the linen napkin taken away from the face, revealing the well-known features, pale and solemn from the shadows of the grave and the light of another world? St. John was there and saw it all, but a holy reticence keeps him from describing the scene. The walk back from the tomb to the village, the surprise and awe of the neighbours, the wonder and gratitude of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as they took up together again the thread of the old familiar life that had been so sadly broken and so wonderfully re-united, and adapted themselves once more to the business and intercourse of earth; these are things upon which our imagination loves to linger, but in regard to which the Evangelist holds a profound silence. We should have liked to know what Lazarus had passed through during his four days' sleep in the tomb. But that secret the Bible will not disclose. Unlike the legends

and myths that record the imaginary adventures of persons said to have returned from the unseen world, the Bible resolutely and systematically refrains from recording the experiences of those who have crossed the fatal line and come back to light and life. But men have not been content to leave inviolate this inscrutable mystery of the Bible; they have superadded glosses of their own. There was a tradition very prevalent and widely believed in the early Christian Church, that the first question which Lazarus asked when he returned to life was, if he should die again; and on being told that he was still subject to the common doom of all men, he was never afterwards seen to smile. But, in the beautiful words of the poet, we can only say—

“When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,  
And home to Mary’s house returned,  
Was this demanded—if he yearned  
To hear her weeping by his grave?

‘Where wert thou, brother, those four days?’  
There lives no record of reply,  
Which, telling what it is to die,  
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,  
The streets were filled with joyful sound,  
A solemn gladness even crown’d  
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ !  
The rest remaineth unrevealed ;  
He told it not, or something sealed  
The lips of that Evangelist."

And we ought, indeed, to be thankful for this silence. We have already, in the Bible, revelations of the mysteries of the unseen world, clothed in images derived from the most glorious things of earth ; and what havoc have men made of these in their attempts to interpret them ! How low, and prosaic, and altogether unworthy are the conceptions to which they give rise in the minds of very many ! A similar fate, we may be sure, would have overtaken any effort made by the restored dead to record their experiences in the poor vain forms of time and sense. And, therefore, it is well that the attempt has not been made ; in any case it would have obstructed the development of our Christian character, by placing before us a hope seen which is not hope, and cheating our faith by the mirage of fancied sight. But perhaps, after all, there was nothing to reveal. It has been suggested that memory is essentially dependent on impressions made upon the brain ; and that, without those impressions to refer to, all our past history would present to us a universal blank. If this be true—and modern science confirms it—then the spirit



in its disembodied state, however conscious and active, has no organ to record its impressions and experiences. It cannot communicate with, or make itself visible to us; it has no idea of time or successive existence, as we have through the limitations and changes of our bodies, and, consequently, a thousand years are to it, as to the Great Spirit Himself, but as one day, and the long interval between death and the resurrection is but like a single moment of sleep, during which a man has dreamt out a whole life-time of the most varied adventures. These considerations suggest the thought that "when the spirit of Lazarus returned to its forsaken companion, and resumed that compound existence in which its faculties could work only by bodily organs, it would find no marks upon the brain of what passed in the intermediate state;" and therefore the interval of four days of death would seem to him like a moment's unconsciousness, in which nothing that happened was remembered, and through which the impressions made upon the body before death alone survived.

But though St. John does not describe the outward immediate effects of the miracle, he discloses explicitly or incidentally the deeper and more abiding effects which it produced upon all who were concerned in it. We see throughout the narrative that the dis-

cipline of Christ's words and actions was separating the spectators into two distinct classes, according to their spiritual discernment or obtuseness; just as the cross of Christ separated the two thieves who were crucified with Him into penitent and impenitent; just as all His work divides mankind into two classes, saved or unsaved. All Divine operations act in the way of tests and judgments, trying the states of men. Some of the spectators saw in the tears of Jesus the proofs of His great love to Lazarus; while others saw in them only the evidences of His weakness and selfishness. And the effect of the final act of the miracle upon each class was in accordance with these differences of moral quality. To the one class, embracing the larger number, the occurrence was so overpowering that they at once believed on the Saviour; while the unbelief and hostility of the other, and smaller class, were only deepened and intensified. The one class enrolled themselves among the followers of Jesus, awed and solemnized by a sense of eternal things; the others, hardened in their hatred, unimpressed by the marvellous display of Jesus' power which they had witnessed, went straight to the authorities to denounce Him, and concoct with them the means for His destruction. We must conclude, however, that the effect in both cases, though in different degrees, was unsatis-

factory ; for even those who believed soon abandoned Him, and were among the fickle multitude who cried "Hosanna to the Highest" one day, and "Away with Him," "Crucify Him" the next. Their faith consisted, not in a spiritual influence produced upon their minds by the Redeemer's personal character, but in a mere transient excitement caused by the wonder of the miracle.

And this result shows to us of how little value are miracles in determining or influencing the spiritual life. The Jews of our Saviour's time had a childish craving for sensible signs, and many mighty works were done before them ; but these miracles produced but a passing impression upon them, and did not at all touch their conscience and heart. How, indeed, could an outward sign, however extraordinary, convince those who were blind to the wonder of love and wisdom, of holiness and meek self-sacrificing devotion, which, greater than any miracle, was exhibited before their eyes in the daily life of Jesus? They sought to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven by the gate of the senses, and not by the gate of the spirit ; and they failed accordingly. We, too, are apt to fancy that miracles would produce a deeper and more satisfying faith than the common means of grace which we enjoy. We have an instinctive

longing for some *natural* outward approach to God. But that knowledge of God by attestations which mere external signs can give, is only the knowledge of His power, not the knowledge of Himself; not the knowledge which is eternal life; and assuredly, if we cannot come near to God by that moral and spiritual process which assimilates us to His nature, we cannot hope to do so by the path of wonders. "If we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will we be persuaded though one rose from the dead;" and what a commentary upon the truth of these words, was the hardening effect produced upon the spectators by the most stupendous of all Christ's miracles!

The effect of the miracle as regards Christ Himself was, as I have previously said, to accelerate His doom. It stirred up the Sanhedrim to take immediate steps to destroy Him; for they feared lest the number of His adherents might prodigiously increase, and thus undermine their own authority, as well as provoke a collision with the Roman power, which would end in national disaster. To avoid this conspiracy, Jesus departed to the seclusion of the obscure town of Ephraim, near the wilderness of Judea, until the Passover—until His appointed hour should come. The restoration of Lazarus to the bosom of his family was the cause of Jesus' banishment; and the raising of Lazarus to life

had the most direct effect in bringing about the death of Jesus. Thus all His acts were anticipations and types of the great final sacrifice of the Cross. It was through loss to Himself that all His generous acts were done ; and now it is by His poverty that we are enriched, by His stripes that we are healed, by His sorrow that we are made joyful, and by His death that we have eternal life.

Upon Lazarus, thus marvellously brought back from the tomb, the effect of the mighty miracle is not recorded. But one further authentic notice of him is given ere the curtain falls upon his history. We find him some days afterwards sitting among the guests at the supper in Bethany ; which, as Trench suggests, like the command to give meat to the revived daughter of Jairus and our Lord's own participation of food after His resurrection, was a proof that his restoration was real and not phantasmal. That banquet was perhaps a sacramental supper, signaling the renunciation of former habits and a consecration to a new and higher life. It was a realization of the Divine promise—“Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” Lazarus had been called from the tomb by the voice of Jesus ; he had heard that voice, and the door of the

tomb was opened; and now the Giver and the receiver of life feasted together. We cannot believe that such a wonderful crisis in the history of Lazarus could have left his heart and life unaffected. The act of death must have precipitated much of the sinful elements of his life; and, defecated from these, "his inward resurrection into a purer and nobler life must have been parallel with his outward resurrection to his ordinary life." If he was the young ruler whom Jesus loved, then the extraordinary discipline of his illness, death and restoration, must have been peculiarly adapted to wean his affections from the things of the world; and, knowing now the true worth and use of riches, nothing would remain to prevent his following the Lord, who did such great things for him, with a heavenly faith supremely, and with a pure heart fervently. He shared, perhaps, as Dr. Plumptre has suggested, in our Saviour's triumphal march from Bethany to Jerusalem, which the miracle wrought upon himself had directly caused, and in the Pentecostal gifts poured down upon the infant Christian church; and then, if not before, the command, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," was obeyed by him as by all the other converts, whose hearts were exhilarated and lifted above all selfishness

by the new wine of the kingdom. He needed the extraordinary discipline to which he had been subjected, not only for his purification, but for his comfort; for he had to pass through scenes of despair and death, which tested faith as gold is tried by the fire. His last years were doubtless spent amid great tribulations, such as were not from the beginning of the world to that time—no, nor ever shall be again. The sorrow that his sisters endured for his sake, he had to endure in keener form for the sake of his Lord when he saw Him nailed to the accursed tree, and numbered among transgressors; and the despondency which came over them when their Lord was absent in their time of sore need, weighed heavily upon himself when the hope of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel by Jesus, which he cherished, had gone out, as it seemed, forever in the tomb of Joseph. And how dreadful must have been his sufferings when he beheld the Mount of Olives, the scenes around his quiet home, trampled under foot of the Roman army, and the temple of Jerusalem perishing amid flames and blood. His restoration to life was not indeed an unmixed good; but, to whatever trials it led, it had prepared the way of his soul for enduring and triumphing over them. And when at length he came to die the second time, the memory of all that his

first death had revealed and accomplished must have made welcome to him the final change which should usher him into the higher home, where violence is no more heard, nor wasting and destruction seen, whose walls are Salvation and gates Praise, and enabled him to sing the triumphal swan-song of the apostle, "O Death where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory?"

As regards the effect produced by the miracle upon the sisters, we are not left to conjecture; there are hints given sufficient to enable us to form a tolerably correct idea of it. At the memorable supper given in honour of Jesus in the quiet home of Bethany, in which life had resumed its former course—a family feast which we may regard as typical of the resurrection communion, when we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven with those whom we loved and lost, and feast with them at a table that shall never more be withdrawn, and from which the guests shall go no more out—we see abundant proofs of the ennobling influence produced by the discipline of sorrow and joy through which they had passed. Before this Mary had been passive and contemplative; "her eyes were homes of silent prayer;" she had been satisfied with receiving rather than giving, with merely sitting at the feet of Jesus in



lowliest reverence, and drinking in with child-like trustfulness His words of eternal life. But now the deep love of her heart, stirred up by her brother's wonderful restoration, longs for self-manifestation. She is no longer content with thoughtful meditation. The cherished alabaster box is brought forth and broken, and all its precious spikenard poured out upon the feet of Jesus, until the room is filled with the odour of the ointment. In a transport of adoring gratitude, she wipes His feet with the hair of her head. She puts her woman's glory under His feet. She loves much, and she gives much to show it. And Jesus gives to her act of true sacrifice a far wider and grander meaning than she herself knows. She puts all the force of her love into the symbol; and the Love that passeth knowledge interprets it beyond human conception. The little arc proves to Him the perfect circle. The temporary act, like everything done to and for Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, gains something of His own enduring and infinite worth. He sees in it the embalming of the victim of death, and the anointing of the conqueror of death. It speaks to Him of another sacrifice more lavish, more uncalculating still, which stands forth as the very type of Divine prodigality—the gift of the only Begotten Son; and it wins from Him that highest meed

of praise, "Wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Nor is the change in Martha less remarkable. She is present at the supper too, serving at the table, and ministering to the comfort of the guests; but she is no longer jealous and intolerant, burdensome to others through cumbering herself with much serving and carefulness about many things. "Her activity has been calmed by trust;" her divided heart has been united by the choice of "the one thing needful." The fulfilment of her simple household duties, done for Christ, is translated by Him into a heavenly ministry. And she who, when first introduced to us, said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me," utters not even a whisper of remonstrance when other rough unsympathetic voices are raised in condemnation of her sister's extravagance. The spiritual education of the two sisters, begun in hours of joy with Jesus, was completed in their hours of sorrow. Each receives the finishing touch, from that stern but wise and gracious teacher, that was needed to perfect her character. The love that was dreamy and unpractical manifests itself in energetic and noble action; and the piety that was over-careful about worldly things, and over-

active about domestic duties, becomes thoughtful and heavenly. We may say of both, in the words of the poet—

“Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,  
Whose loves in higher love endure ;  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs.”

And what effect ought the great miracle to have upon us, for we too are witnesses of it, and for our sakes also it was wrought? It is as useful to us in the record as it was to the spectators in the doing. Its temporary effect has been long over for ever, but its permanent effect upon the souls of men may still be felt and seen. It is to us a sign, significant of something interior to, and higher than, the bare physical performance. It was the custom among the wealthy members of the early Christian Church in the East to have a picture of the raising of Lazarus woven upon their outer garments, in order that, like the Pharisees, who made broad their phylacteries, they might be considered pious by men, and be approved of by God. But not upon our garments, but upon our hearts, should we bear the inimitable record of this most gracious and wonderful work. And so cherished, so woven into the very texture of our nature and life, it will help to make us truly pious and

blessed. In our hours of despair of ourselves, it will teach us that He who raised Lazarus from the grave, where he had lain four days, can quicken all who have lain so long in the grave of sin, and been bound so fast by habits of evil that they seem almost incapable of renewal, and translate them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In our hours of sorrow and loneliness, because of bereavement, it will teach us how deeply our Lord sympathizes with those passionate human griefs of which He seems to us so unmindful; and that it is not ignorance, or absence, or lack of love on His part, that has permitted our beloved ones to die, but that the glory of God in our own higher good might be promoted. And in our hours of doubt and fear, when looking forward to our future fate, it will speak to us of the resurrection of the body at the last day; it will be a specimen of that new genesis under which there shall be no more death, and all the old things of the curse shall be done away with, and eternal life shall be the perfect exercise of all our true and pure human affections forevermore.

But, great and blessed as it is, not upon the resurrection of Lazarus alone, or chiefly, do our hopes depend. God has given to us some better thing. We have the surpassing wonder of Christ's own resur-

rection from the grave—the culminating point of the whole miracle-structure of the Divine history of revelation—the sum of the Gospel. And His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. The resurrection of Lazarus was a resurrection within the limits of this frail mortal existence. It was a restoration to the old earthly life, with all its wants and woes, its limitations and its inevitable termination; but the resurrection of Jesus is the revelation of a new life, wherein all that belonged only to this rudimental life shall be dropped, as the chrysalis drops its exuviae in developing its wings, but retaining for ever all faculties and functions essentially human. It is not an extension of the weary, sorrowful existence with which we are already acquainted, for in that case it would be more a bane than a benefit, but the manifestation of an existence free from all the evils of this life, strengthened and enlarged to walk with the angels the great paths of immortality, and to bear unburdened the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” It issues not, as in the case of Lazarus, in a second death, but in ascension into the deathless mansions of the Father’s home. And, in the faith of this glorious resurrection, we can lie down and take the last long sleep in the dust of the earth, in the sure and certain hope, that, if the Spirit of Him that raised up

Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. The work of regeneration begun in the soul, where the work of death began, shall be completed in the resurrection and final redemption of the body. For that crowning wonder of creative power and love we wait in hope, trusting in Him who is the Light of both worlds, and knowing, amid all our sorrows and bereavements, that—

“The song of woe  
Is, after all, an earthly song.”

THE END.

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